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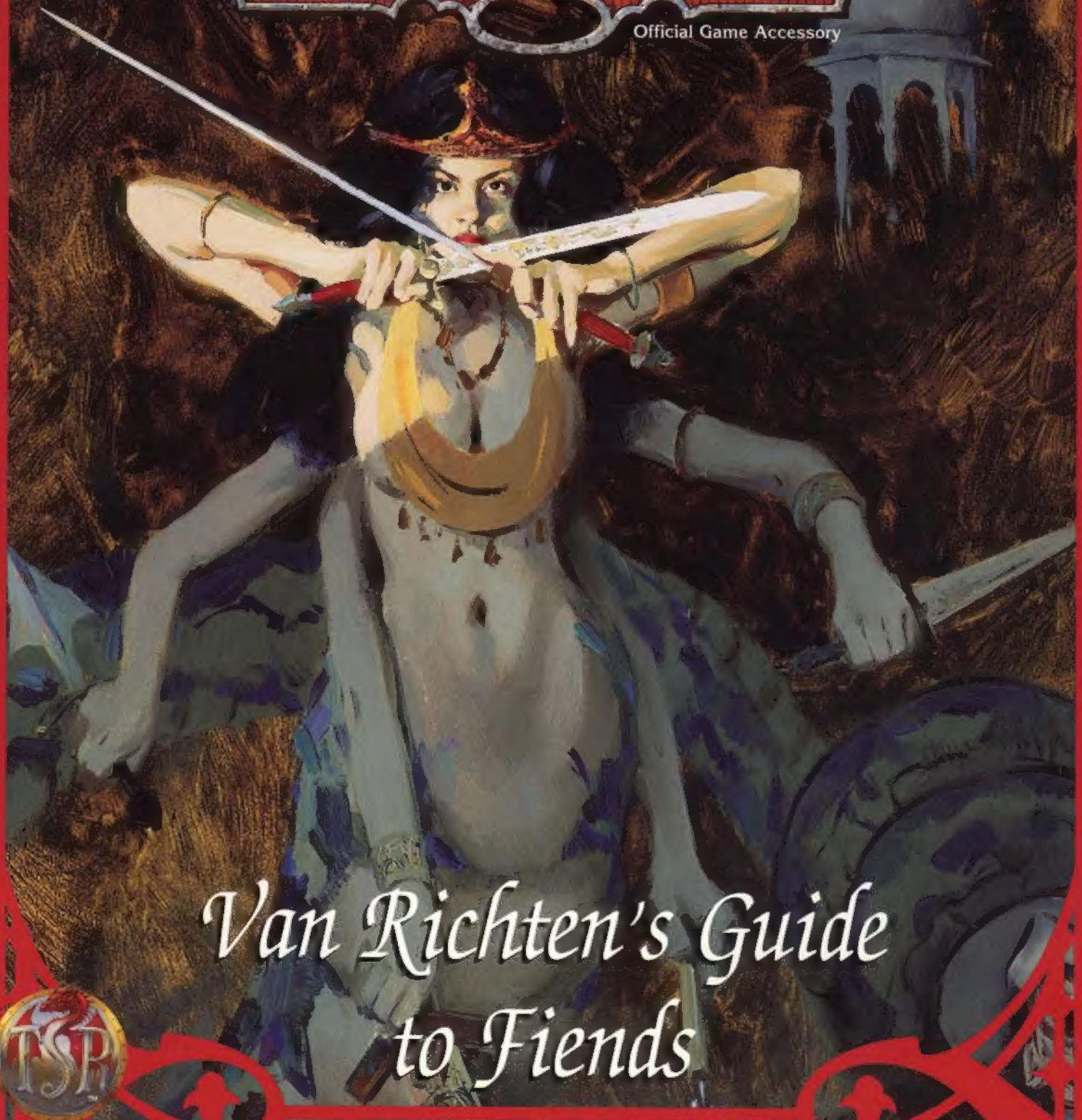

Van Richten's Guide to Fiends

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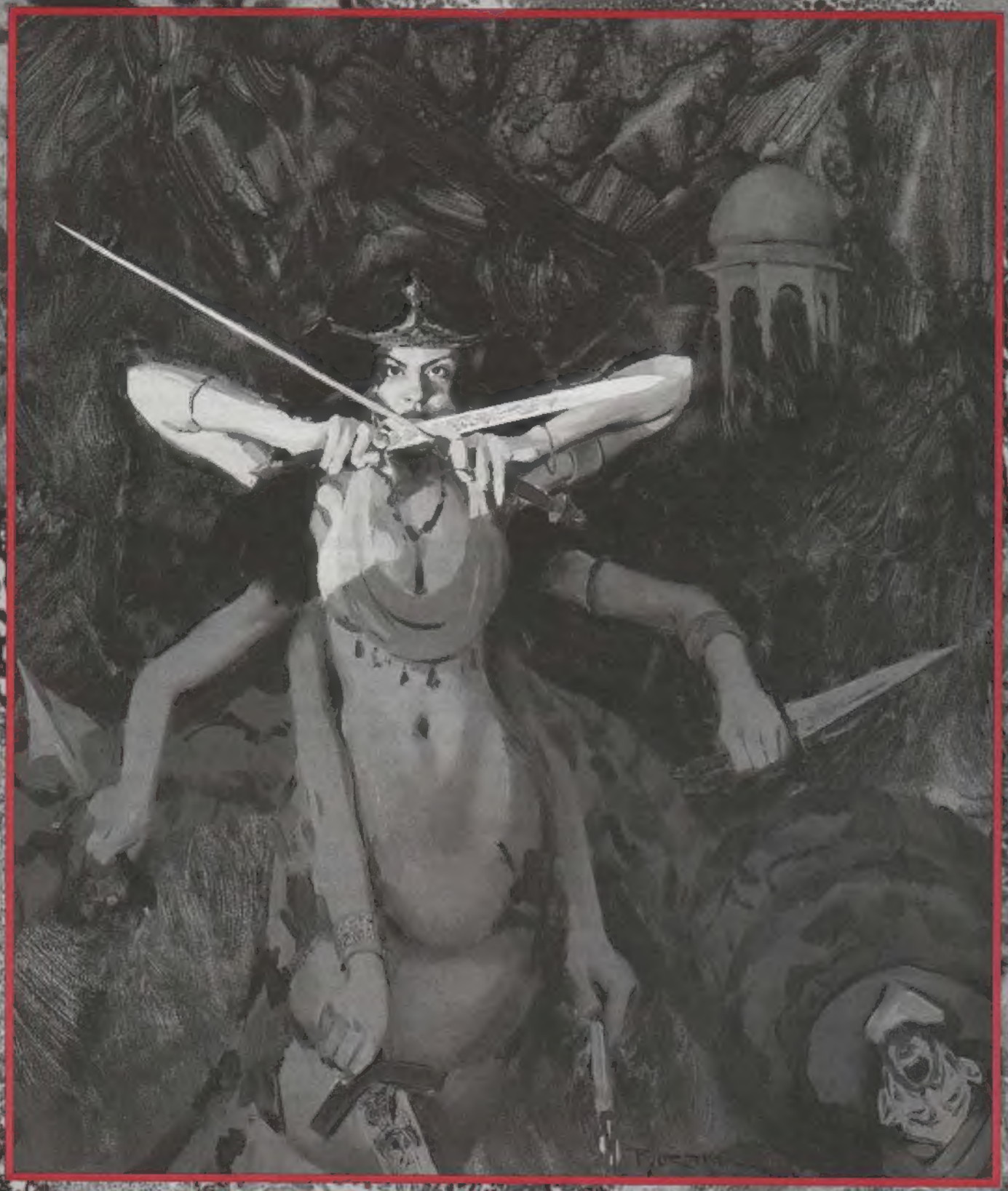
VAN RICHTEN'S GUIDE TO FIENDS



VAN RICHTEN'S GUIDE TO FIENDS

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INTRODUCTION

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

—Edmund Burke (attributed)

My name is Rudolph Van Richten, and I have spent over half my lifetime exploring the darkest places this land and its people have to offer. I fancied I knew the extent of evil, that I had plumbed its depths. As I have discovered during these past thirteen months, I was wrong. There are *things* out there, things so foul that I now believe the philosophers who maintain that evil itself can be made manifest in the world.

I have battled evil in a variety of forms, from the cadaverous mummy to the vampires who first set my feet on the road I now travel. Through it all, my keen powers of observation, the support of able and brave companions, and the fact that I was fighting the good fight, kept me going. In the face of one of these monstrosities—which a fellow scholar termed *fiends*—it all amounted to naught.

Not since the loss of my beloved wife and son have I felt despair weigh so heavily on my heart. I have faced a fiend in mortal combat, and my defeat has resulted in a loss that will be felt by many in our land.

I cannot, however, allow myself the luxury of succumbing to despair. I must press ever-forward, and I must alert all who dwell in our land to the threat presented by these fiends.

Based on my studies, I doubt that in all the hundreds of years that civilized peoples have existed in the Land of the Mists more than a half dozen fiends have blighted our homeland. Yet, this mere handful of creatures have spread more suffering than all the Falkovnian invasions of Darkon combined.

Fiends possess not only brute strength that is almost beyond comprehension, but they have the power to insinuate themselves into the very minds of the unwary or evil. Further, their lives span centuries, perhaps even millennia, and thus they draw upon experiences that cover the rise and fall of civilizations. Finally, unlike the ghosts, vampires and werebeasts that plague us, fiends have no link to the mortals who dwell around them. On some level, the lesser horrors wish for the continued existence and prosperity of both the Land and mortals who dwell here; after all, their existence is tied to both in a twisted fashion. Fiends have no such connection, and no such desire. To the fiends who wander our lands, we and our homes are at best toys, and at worst obstacles to rip apart until we are lost even to memory.

The Inheritance

I became aware of the existence of fiends through a library bequeathed to me by Aimon Davidovich, a respected colleague and fellow expert on the unnatural. It took Aimon's servants three wagons and one week's labor to transfer the contents of his vast library from his home in Darkon to my own small establishment in Mordent. Although I had known Aimon for some thirty-odd years, I had not realized the true extent of his collection.

Along with the basic tomes on medicine, alchemy, philosophy, mathematics, and the sciences that all truly educated individuals possess, Aimon's library contained a treasure trove of information on the arcane. In documents ranging from the uncommon to the utterly obscure, Aimon had carefully catalogued texts by mystics, adventurers, wizards, priests, and others whose writings centered on their experiences with creatures who defied all known types of categorization. In addition to his meticulous cross-referencing and indexing, Aimon was creating a thesis of his own

regarding these individual manifestations of evil and malice, which he called "fiends."

At once horrified and intrigued by Aimon's theories, I immediately plunged into my own research, indexing his library, determined to come to my own conclusions.

I confess that I hoped Aimon's legendary mental acuity had begun to fade in his declining years, and that his final, unfinished work was the comibined result of a lifetime studying evil and the paranoia that sometimes affects the old and sickly. These thoughts were unworthy of my fond memories of Aimon, but if his postulations were correct, an evil beyond all that I had yet fought was loose in our world.

I should never have allowed such doubt to color my thoughts, for it slowed my ability to absorb and accept the truth of Aimon's observations. Still, after three weeks ensconced among the dusty parchments that were the final testament to a valiant man's time upon this earth, my intellectual training and experience could only lead me to the conclusion that my old friend's thesis was correct; there were fiends, beings from another world, among us.

Still adjusting to this realization, my tired eyes fell upon a series of tomes. The books, numbering sixteen in total, were written by a clan of purported mystics over the course of almost four hundred years. It seemed that in each generation, one member of the family would continue the writings of his uncle or father. Aimon had labeled this series *The Madrigorian*, for the Madrigore family that was responsible for its existence.

Although the works were extensive, they appeared to be the collected ravings of a family cursed with hereditary insanity, and, Aimon felt, was not worthy of further inspection. However, his final note made me turn to the strange series of works.

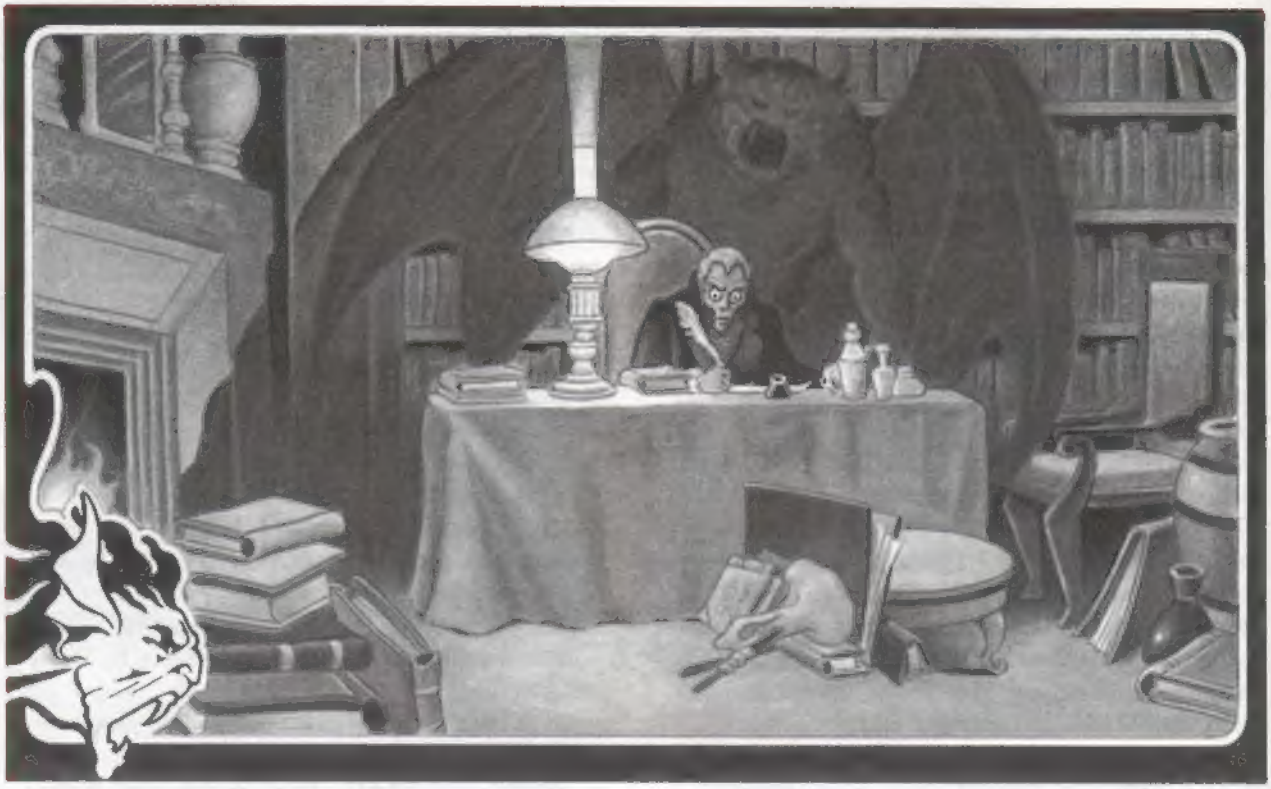
In the margins of his workbook Aimon had written: ". . . and despite no evidence of formal education, the members of the Madrigore family write with a surprising facility and seemingly instinctive grasp of vocabulary and its proper usage. Even more intriguing is the amazing symmetry in writing style and penmanship found among the authors across the generations. I must consult Farringer on how such symmetry of thought and style could be achieved across so many years."

In reading these notes, scrawled awkwardly in my old friend's ever-abysmal penmanship, I was reminded of the writings of the vampires, liches, and other creatures that live far longer than the normal span of a mortal life. Could these Madrigores actually be a single, unnatural, hopelessly insane individual?

With this initial theory in mind, I turned to the two piles of tomes, each neatly arranged stack reaching almost to my chest in its height. Although not relishing the possibility of working my way through four centuries of rambling insanity, I could not help but feel that there was something of importance to be gained by such an exercise.

Over the course of the next nine days and nights, I did little else but read and re-read the incredible words of the mad Madrigores. At first, I agreed with Aimon, that the entire effort must have resulted from a congenital and/or environmentally-incurred mass-psychosis. The writings in no way indicated the thought processes I have become so familiar with in liches, vampires, and other ancient creatures whose paths have crossed my own. Yet, the constancy and clarity of the writing, and of the mad ideas they espoused, were too internally consistent to dismiss out of hand. No lunatic I have ever met was capable of such sustained, complex, and organized thought processes, let alone multiple generations of lunatics! Thus, performing the action Aimon had considered, I sent my new assistant, Samuel, with an invitation for Dr. Ottelie Farringer to meet with me regarding an intriguing puzzle that seemed suited to her skills.

Those readers familiar with Dr. Farringer's works undoubtedly grasped why Aimon thought to question her about *The Madrigorian*. For those unacquainted with the great lady's



accomplishments, I recommend acquiring a copy of her *Illustrated Manual of Linguistic and Scriptal Aberrations Indicative of Psychopathology*. Dr. Farringer's expertise in tracing identities and psychological propensities through linguistic and handwriting analysis is widely recognized, and she pioneered its study at the universities of Mordent, Darkon, and other lands. Not a few dark creatures have been exposed through her labors.

Dr. Farringer resided in a village less than half-a-day's journey from my home, and her vigorous energy is well known to any who have met the remarkable woman even once. Therefore, it did not surprised me when she arrived upon my doorstep the very next morning, sweeping in behind the blushing form of Samuel, who was ever shy in the company of women, particularly those as handsome and forthright as Dr. Farringer.

I told her about my puzzlement over a series of tomes I had recently acquired. I refrained from telling her that the tomes were purportedly written over the course of many generations, merely furnishing her with a number of sample pages from the tomes.

With her famed intensity of concentration, Dr. Farringer bent to the task of analyzing the excerpts of text. After working through the afternoon and past the supper hour, she finally arrived at her conclusion: the text was written by the same individual. Before I could comment, she also asserted that the individual in question might appear to be a lunatic to the inexperienced observer, but that she doubted this actually was the case. "Instead, Rudolph, I believe the author to be a singularly evil, brilliant, petty, and malicious . . . creature! Now, show me the rest of the texts that you have hidden from me while you tested your theory."

At this remark, I could not help but laugh, and without further ado, I proceeded to explain the known history of the *Madrigorian* and its supposedly multiple creators. I also revealed

Aimon's theories on fiends.

Being younger and sharper-eyed than myself, Dr. Farringer had no trouble setting at once to reading the first of the sixteen tomes. While she immersed herself in the collection, I arranged with Samuel to ready the guest bedroom for a long stay.

Six days later, Dr. Farringer had completed her examination of *The Madrigorian*. Of course, I had not wasted this time, using it to peruse a number of other works Aimon had catalogued as containing information of possible value in the study and understanding of the fiend.

Over the course of the next fortnight, Dr. Farringer and I debated, theorized, researched, argued, and worked out a number of initial hypotheses concerning the nature of fiends. Although I believe that working in tandem was a new and rewarding experience for both of us, the information we gleaned was so sobering that we could not properly appreciate the intellectual collaboration. I will always regret that.

At the end of the second week, Dr. Farringer set off for home, her carriage laden with a large percentage of Aimon's documents. While Dr. Farringer laboriously attempted to separate truth from fiction, I turned once more to studying *The Madrigorian* and the Madrigore family itself. For during our collaboration I had reached one theory I had withheld from Dr. Farringer: that the entire *Madrigorian* had been written (and was no doubt still being written) by a fiend.

Within the week, I was off to search out the Madrigores. For if I were correct, then my ever-dwindling hope that fiends were merely the fantastical delusions of a number of crazed or misguided individuals would have to be false. For, if Aimon's collection of lore proved true, if Dr. Farringer's assessment of the Madrigores was accurate, then there were nigh-eternal creatures among us who preyed directly on the evil men all-too-often allow to fester in our hearts, creatures who lead both the weak and the strong onto a path of evil that inevitably ends in the destruction of all we hold dear.

Yet, in the horrific event that the frustrated, arrogant author of the *Madrigorian* was an actual fiend, I would at least have an invaluable tool at my disposal—his autobiography. It was my hope that *The Madrigorian* and the insights and confessions found therein would give a mere mortal a chance to defeat a foe almost too powerful to comprehend.

Unfortunately, my hopes were dashed, even as my deepest fears came to fruition.

A Personal Note

This volume reveals the results of my research and my personal experience, small as that may be. Due to this dearth of face-to-face encounters with fiends, I have been forced to rely on the vast research amassed by Doctor Aimon Davidovich, as well as the documents uncovered and interviews recorded by Doctor Ottelie Farringer and others.

For readers familiar with my previous works, the scholarly style of this treatise may seem a bit unusual, lacking as it is in the practical applications of many theories. In lieu of these, and in addition to relying on a number of quoted sources, I have endeavored to aid my readers by including large portions of notes made as I tracked down the fiend I now know as Drigor. The notes contain personal as well as clinical information, and I have debated long and hard whether to include them in this volume. However, I have concluded that my personal discomfort is unimportant when weighed against my obligation to show the potential fiend-hunter the personal hardships of the struggle.

Too often, even experienced champions of good think only of the pain of the claw slicing flesh, or other immediate physical agonies and dangers they must face. However, these are but small things when compared to the agonies of the spirit and the heart which confront the fiend hunter.

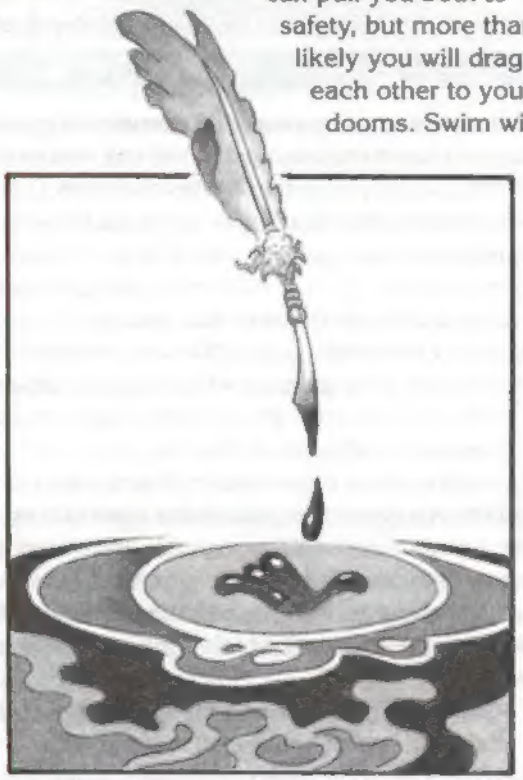
Those who fight the good fight always risk the possibility of wounds that may never heal, wounds of the spirit. Once you have glimpsed the mangled recesses of my heart, and if the

prospect of such suffering is too terrible to contemplate, look to some other, safer pursuit. For those of you prepared to face the possibility of unending pain, forever tainting any satisfaction you may feel, I commend you. You will preserve our future.

A Final Caveat

Everything humanly possible has been done to assure that the information contained within this work is valid. Yet, any who wish to make use of this information, however valuable it may be, must ever employ their own critical faculties in determining its usefulness.

It cannot be stated too many times that each fiend is a unique individual and must be treated as such! To rely unquestioningly on any single source of information is to clutch onto a fellow swimmer foundering in the waves. Perhaps he can pull you both to safety, but more than likely you will drag each other to your dooms. Swim with him, help each other, rely on yourself and all the resources at your disposal. Perhaps you will prevail where I, as of this writing, have not.



It *must* be possible to defeat these fell creatures termed "fiends," and it falls upon only the most brave and able of adventurers to accomplish this task. If noble men and women allow fear and horror to keep them from standing in the face of evil, evil will surely triumph. We must ever strive to keep evil out of our hearts, our homes, and our lands if we are to pass our civilization and its many wonders on to the next generation.

Editor's Note: Van Richten refers to "humans" throughout this text. Unless otherwise noted, the term also encompasses demihumans.

Information and rules directly pertinent to the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting appears in gray sidebars like this one. Ideally, such information is for the Dungeon Master (DM) only, while players will learn this information through their characters' experiences. In addition, there is an appendix at the end of this accessory that contains hints regarding the creation of adventures featuring fiends.

Note that Van Richten does not know that there are several races of fiends (tanar'ri, baatezu, etc.). He believes fiends are individual creatures with unique powers. Van Richten's descriptions of fiendish powers are not always correct and where his descriptions differ from the gray-screened text, the gray-screened text takes precedence.

Note also that the powers ascribed to fiends in this text are those which belong to only those fiends currently trapped in Ravenloft. DMs should refer to the *Monstrous Compendium* or the PLANESCAPE™ *Monstrous Compendium* for more information concerning these monsters.

1: Entering the Land

There are realms and realms incomprehensible to the puny mortals who dwell within this cage that they term the Land of the Mists. If only they knew that they were but prisoners, if only they could see the bars . . . but only I have that power because only I have stepped wide-eyed into this pestilent corner of creation, granting the groveling morsel that was my original self the opportunity to travel to that beyond, even as I, my true mind, took hold of this mortal shell . . .

—The Madrigorian, *Book I, Chapter I.*

Many medical professionals will tell you that before one can effectively treat any disease, one must first attempt to define its root cause or point of origin. It is my experience that creatures of darkness can be viewed in much the same way as malign tumors.

So, what are the circumstances surrounding fiendish origins, and the source of their vast powers? In previous works, I have mentioned the theories relating to the negative and positive energies that feed the life force of several unnatural creatures that stalk our land. It would be convenient if I could once again draw upon those underpinnings in this discourse, but the monstrosity of fiends is too great.

Fiends do not appear to draw strength from the *negative material plane*, the source that sustains the likes of vampires and liches. They do not exhibit any of the characteristics of the undead. By the same token, they do not seem to draw upon the *positive material plane*, as they do not share traits with the Ancient Dead. From where, then, do these fiends acquire their might? The answer is most likely found in a cosmology so vast that it nearly defies definition.

Philosophers have long held that there are realities beyond number existing alongside our own. I have always doubted such grand, even limitless, visions of existence; yet, the presence of fiends among us seems to prove that there must be some type of alternate realities somewhere.

Fiends possess a degree of individualism that, when I study them, reminds me of a room full of vicious warriors. Although they all share their skill with arms, each has his own personality and style. The same can be said of fiends. Although only a few such creatures have found their way into our world, and each and every one is capable of causing unspeakable devastation, each does so in its own unique way. Like you and I, fiends are just as much defined by what sets them apart from each other as what joins them. It is my belief that they are spawned in an alternate reality, the hallmarks of which are corruption and agony beyond measure.

However, some scholars claim that the origin of fiends may be found here in our own lands. It is possible that they are right, and that my views are based on unjustified assumptions. After all, even the existence of these other planes is still a matter of strong debate in the arenas of higher learning.

Single-Reality Paradigms

Over the course of centuries, numerous theories on the origins of fiends have been espoused by individuals ranging from the great philosopher-warrior Astonby of the Oaks to crazed mystics jabbering their lives away in asylums. Each of the following theories assumes that there is only one level of reality and, ergo, fiends must originate in our own land. Although I am now inclined to believe these theories too narrow in their visions of reality, the following hypotheses certainly show enough merit to warrant serious consideration.

Evolution and the Lich

The lich is one of the most dangerous, obscenely evil creatures found in the Land of the Mists. However, the demilich is an even more calcified monstrosity whose great will combines with its wizardly skills and undead powers to form one of the most deviously intelligent and frightening beings I have ever heard tell of.

Over the years, my long-time friend Astonby of the Oaks and several noted scholars have surmised that fiends are the final evolutionary stage in the development of the lich. According to this theory, the demiliches who become fiends have entered a new stage of existence—one in which they are neither living, dead, nor undead, but a being so hideous and powerful that we can no longer consider it in any way connected to the races of mortals.

If this theory is true, then it is all the more important that we to track down the liches who make their homes among us. While I would not discourage such hunts, I must mention that this theory of evolution contradicts what I have learned of the demilich; it is my opinion that demiliches have no need for phylacteries and no desire to assume the physical forms in which we find fiends. (However, this in-and-of-itself may be evidence for the accuracy of this theory; more on this later.)

Step-Child of the Land

Another theory that is more wide-spread than the first, but slightly more complicated and philosophical in nature, is that of the "Land's Step-child." This theory of fiendish origins states that fiends are somehow the product of gathering malignancies that form over the centuries in our homeland. How such "evil cradles" arise is entirely theoretical. The most coherent hypothesis is that the evil performed by mortals permeates the psyche of the land. At some point, the malignancy reaches a critical level of evil energies and achieves a primitive degree of consciousness. It then searches out a vulnerable mortal and begins to take over his body, or responds to a strong summoning, or possibly even steps directly out of the Mists. Once embodied, the evil becomes one of the creatures we know as fiends.

If this theory is true, than we must all think soberly upon what we have wrought. For, although the fiend is still utterly alien and evil, it is the child of misdeeds. Our actions may have even greater consequences than we realize.

Extra-Planar Origins

As stated earlier, it is my belief that only a realm of unyielding corruption and evil could spawn things as hideous as fiends, and what does that speak of our homeland should they originate here? This is why we must turn to the as-of-yet unproven other-planes.

Through my research I have determined that there are at least two different ways in which fiends may enter our plane of existence.

Transposition

It is a universal truth that in order to thrive, evil must first be granted the opportunity to insinuate itself into a community, or into the hearts of men.

The process I term *transposition* is no doubt the most intimate way to invite a *grand mal* into our land. Through this process, a single individual can, in one fell swoop, both destroy himself and provide a fiend with the proverbial invitation to enter the Land of the Mists.

Many believe that the stories of good and evil that priests use to instruct their flocks are parables, mere reflections of philosophic truths but not based in fact. This is not so. Whenever an individual commits a vile or vicious act, he indeed eases the way for more such acts.

Evil seeks to seduce those who open their hearts and minds to its call. Fiends, then, being creatures of absolute evil, seek out those souls that offer fertile ground for their perversions.

I: ENTERING THE LAND

It seems that fiends can establish a tentative psychic connection with humans tainted by evil. If the object of the fiend's interest responds by continuing along his foul course, the connection between the two—mortal and fiend—increases in strength and becomes a physical link.

As this connection is reinforced, the fiend insinuates itself into the body and mind of its chosen victim.The culmination of the process appears to result in the transposition of the two beings: the fiend enters our land, while the host takes its place, frail flesh and all, on the fiend's home plane.

I have thus far located at least two distinct sources documenting the process of transposition. The first of these comes from the second book of *The Madrigorian*, supposedly penned by the original Madrigore's daughter. However, for the sake of clarity, I will refer to the actual author, Drigor, the fiend whom I have learned is responsible for the sixteen volume opus. The various Madrigore "authors" are mere mouthpieces for the fiend's discourses. (The ability of fiends to control the minds of mortals will be addressed in Chapter Four.)

During the course of a long treatise on the nature of reality and humanity's place in the universe, Drigor writes:

. . . for it is the ultimate calling of we mortals to prepare our bodies and spirits through the most debased acts. Only by acting out the secret desires that lurk in the darkest corners of our minds can we rid ourselves of the evil festering within us. Otherwise, we will forever be unclean, full of impure thoughts and desires. But if we lance the festering boils our consciences create, we might be blessed with the attention of one of the wandering Great Ones. And if we are truly vigorous and do not shirk acting out our innermost evil, then might such a Great One deign to reward us by translating his body with our own. The pain of such a transportation will be glorious in its horror, but only through pain can we be cleansed. Then will we receive the highest of honors as the Great One will take our

December First,

Today has proved a most fascinating day. After a month of research on my own and with Dr. Farringer (a most extraordinary woman!), Samuel and I set out to determine whether there were any living heirs to the Madrigore name and literary pursuit. Regardless of the current status of the Madrigore family, I am determined to discover any information I can on the family and whether or not my theory that a fiend is behind the creation of The Madrigorian is correct.

Imagine my surprise when we arrived in the small hamlet of Edrigan (the family's home), and found Dr. Farringer comfortably seated in the local inn, feet propped up before the raging fire and nose firmly ensconced in one of Aimon's notebooks! Almost before I was across the threshold, Dr. Farringer informed me, in no uncertain terms, that she intended to be involved in every aspect of this investigation. Though she refused to tell me how she had learned of my plans, Samuel's scrutiny of his boots during our confrontation was all the answer I needed.

Realizing the futility of arguing with such a formidable and resourceful personality, I agreed to our partnership in this matter. I must confess that I think working in the field with Dr. Farringer will prove a most interesting experience. It is rare for me to deal with my equals outside the academic settings. Plus, her sharp mind and pointed wit would be blessings upon any endeavor.

It took us little effort this morning to discover that, although the eldest Madrigore, Atchen, had recently died of consumption, his young daughter, Bethany, was already continuing in her family's bizarre footsteps . . .

—Rudolph Van Richten, Personal Journal.

place upon this tainted land so that we might enjoy our just rewards . . .

—The Madrigorian, Book III, Chapter VII.

Here, Drigor describes an obviously warped and evil philosophy. It takes little philosophical training to realize that committing evil acts only increases the evil in one's heart. There is no finite amount of villainy to be disposed of like pus drained from a cyst! Yet, I fear there are those who use such justifications to commit evil, just as the fiend desires.

Careful translation of this passage reveals that a fiend may perform a physical transposition, rearranging of the flesh, blood, and other organs of the host's body until it reforms itself into whatever foul substances compose the body of the fiend.

The second source that provides information on the process of transposition is the diary of a young woman whose sister succumbed to the fiend known as Elsepeth. This source is particularly illuminating, as it documents the mental and physical transposition of a young woman and a fiend. From this account, we can clearly see that the transposition process takes place over a period of days, and it seems clearly to be spurred forward by acts of evil on the part of the fiend's mortal victim.

September 8,

I do not know what has happened to my dear sister Ammie. She has always despaired of finding a husband, but this last month she has become even more dejected. No matter how much I tried to convince her of her inner beauty and kindness, she continued to insist that it was easy for me to say such things, as I was also beautiful on the outside!

Last night, she snuck into our room well past midnight. I asked her where she had been at such an hour, and she refused to answer me. This morning I learned that Deirdre, the pretty tailor's daughter who is to marry Johan Walrich, was attacked last night by a mysterious assailant, her face scratched and beaten until she is nearly unrecognizable. I nearly fainted at the news, but Ammie just smiled quietly. It was then that I noted the new luster in her eyes, the rosy glow to her skin . . .

—From the Diary of Tasha Weaveron.

Tasha writes several more entries relating concerns about her sister and the sudden increase in violence in their small town. Several more of the town's women are viciously attacked and scarred by the unknown assailant. After each such attack Tasha notes that Ammie seems to grow lovelier, yet more alien in appearance and temperment. Further, she records the strange nightly fits her sister suffers closely after each attack:

September 15,

Ammie must be more affected by these horrid attacks than I at first thought. I was wrong to accuse her of reveling in others' pain. Yet she seems so happy, even radiant. I do not think I believe in magic elixirs that create beauty, but if there were such a potion then surely my sister is drinking it. This morning, across the breakfast table, I realized just how blindingly beautiful Ammie has become, seemingly overnight. How can this be possible? Especially when she goes through such hideous dreams and nightly agonies?

Her sheets are always soaked with sweat in the mornings, and all too often this month I have awakened to find her huddled on the floor moaning in agony. Last night, as I held her in my arms, I begged her to have papa send for the physician, but she refused, mumbling that "the pain passes when Elsepeth brings me my beauty." Seeing her stare up at me with her light green eyes, the eyes that had once been brown, I swear I saw hatred there. But then her face softened into a smile and she told me not to worry. But I know something is horribly wrong with my dear sister. Should I tell papa?

—From the Diary of Tasha Weaveron.

In this entry, note the change in eye color and the comments on Ammie's newfound beauty. Although Tasha suggests that her sister might be taking some sort of beauty elixir, I believe she was witnessing Ammie's transposition with a fiend of great physical beauty.

There is one more entry in the diary that bears presenting here. It is the last entry, and I believe it also marks the end of the unfortunate lives of both Tasha and her sister, Ammie:

September 20,

The worst has befallen us! I still cannot believe it, though I heard it from Ammie's own lips . . . It is Ammie who has been maiming the young women in our village. Her friends and relations! Tonight, she confessed to murdering Desiree Fontaine, the mayor's daughter! How could she?

And after telling me this horrible thing, she touched my hair and gave me the oddest smile. It set my teeth to chattering! But I haven't yet confessed the worst . . . within minutes after Ammie went to bed she began to writhe silently, her mouth gaping in agony! I was so horrified I could do nothing but press myself against the wall. I could not even scream, my throat was so choked with fear! It was then that those awful brown wings burst from Ammie's back, spreading around her like some terrible cloak of evil! Ammie is still now, as I quickly record these words. I have resolved that I must get papa. He will— [The line ends mid-sentence, with a slash of ink.]

How silly my earlier ravings now seem! When I turned around, I had expected to see my sister revealed as a monster, but instead she looked just as she always had, brown eyes and all! And of course no wings or claws! When I confessed my strange delusions to my dear sister, she said I must have been dreaming. Of course she hadn't murdered or maimed anyone—how ridiculous! I can see now that she was right. I'll do as she suggests and go with her to pick flowers at the falls tomorrow. Things will

be just like they used to be and I'm sure we'll be happy, so happy, just as Ammie says.

— From the Diary of Tasha Weaveron.

> *Rudolph, note how the handwriting changes in the final paragraph! Note particularly the grammar school precision of the loops of the letters o, j, and g. I have seen such sudden reversions to a more childish hand in subjects undergoing hypnosis or in individuals controlled by spells such as* suggestion *or* command. *In my opinion, the Tasha Weaveron who wrote the final paragraph is not wholly in control of her mind at the time of this writing!*
>
> *—Dr. Ottelie Farringer, Clinical Notes.*

Unfortunately, I am certain this last entry is an eyewitness account of the final phase of transposition, when the fiend Elsepeth utterly replaced Ammie. (Presumably, the unfortunate girl in turn took the fiend's place in its home world. Her pitiable fate is perhaps better left unimagined.) The final paragraph confirms the completion of the transformation. Dr. Farringer's analysis of Tasha Weaveron's handwriting in the final entry in her diary confirms that Elsepeth used certain powers to convince the poor girl that all she had seen and heard was just a dream, as well as to hide her true appearance. These sorts of powers are common to fiends, and I will explore them in greater detail in the next chapter.

A final note on this sad episode before we move on to a discussion of the next way a fiend may enter our land. This diary was dated only twelve years ago, so I journeyed to the small town just outside Stangengrad in Falkovnia to see if I could gather more information on Ammie and Tasha. The town's innkeeper told me the story of how both girls died in a terrible accident. The two sisters had climbed to the top of Grashen Falls to gather flowers and had apparently ventured too far onto the slippery boulders. Tasha's body was found on the jagged rocks below, and Ammie's body was never recovered from the churning waters. The Weaveron family was devastated by the double tragedy and soon left the area. The innkeeper had no idea where they now reside.

From the innkeeper's account, I believe it is safe to say that Elsepeth murdered the inconvenient witness to her arrival. After this, the fiend proceeded to spread corruption and despair in the neighboring realm of Borca, tempting men into depraved acts with womanly wiles not of this world, as Dr. Farringer and I uncovered evidence of these activities while researching the fiends More on this later.

Transposition

Certain of the more powerful beings of the Lower Planes often search for mortals to destroy, corrupt, or otherwise manipulate. Although none willingly enter the Land of the Mists (because they are aware that they will very likely become trapped in Ravenloft should they do so), fiends are not always aware the vulnerable mortal whose mind they have connected with lives within the Demiplane of Dread. Although this type of confusion on the part of a fiend is rare, it *does* occasionally occur. Thus, fiends can fall prey to their own malevolence, transposing themselves into the trap that is the Land of the Mists.

As explained in the RAVENLOFT boxed set's information on Dark Powers checks, when dealing with nonplayer characters (NPCs) the DM may simply decide whether the character's evil act attracts the attentions of the Dark Powers. Likewise, the DM may decide that a fiend has sensed the character's potential for evil and established an initial connection to the person.

In the case of player characters committing acts of evil, the DM should make the normal Dark Powers check, but decide whether it is a fiend, unknowingly

monitoring the demiplane, who formed an initial linkage with the character in lieu of the Dark Powers.

The process of transposition is almost identical to the process by which a character proceeds through the Stages of Evil. There are only three major differences between the two processes:

- It is the fiend, not the Dark Powers, that forms the unholy bond with the offending character.
- There are only five stages in the process (instead of the normal six).
- Once a fiend has established contact and begun the process of transposition, *any evil act* causes the next stage in the transposition to proceed. (This is due to the fiend's much more conscious and deliberate control of the transposition process.)

If a character proceeds through all five stages of the transposition, the fiend will take the character's place and be loosed upon the hapless denizens of Ravenloft. (As with Power Checks, player characters gradually slip from the players' control, eventually becoming NPCs.)

Only the following fiends may enter Ravenloft through transposition:

Baatezu: erinyes, gelugon, pit fiend
Gehreleth: farastu, kelubar, shator
Tanar'ri: balor, nabassu, succubi (incubi)
Yugoloth: arcanaloth, nycaloth, yagnoloth

Other fiends either do not possess the necessary motivation and/or intelligence to initiate the process of transposition.

Stages of Transposition

There are five stages of transposition. These stages are almost identical to the Stages of Evil caused by contact with the Dark Powers, save that the character gradually exchanges places with the fiend.

If the process is completed, the fiend is in the Demiplane of Dread, while the unfortunate character ends up somewhere on the netherplanes. This character is subsequently subject of a fate too horrible to contemplate at the talons of his new fiendish neighbors.

The Dungeon Master must first decide what type of fiend has focused its attention on the wayward character, for the physical and mental transformations occurring at each stage of the process are determined by the exact nature of the fiend in question. In general, a chaotic fiend (such as a tanar'ri) will be much more likely to notice a chaotic evil act, whereas a lawful fiend (such as a baatezu) will be attracted to a more lawful evil act.

Similarly, individual fiends are more sensitive to acts of evil that they themselves find most pleasurable. For example, Ammie's initial jealous attack on a girl she believed to be prettier than herself attracted the attention of a succubus, a creature sensitive to passionate emotions, especially those involving desire, jealousy, and lust.

The following information describes the five basic stages of transposition. Table 1 describes the physical changes that occur during transposition for each type of fiend.

Stage one, the connection:

At this stage the fiend reaches out across the planes and forms an initial psychic bond with the character. The character's body shows only minor alterations. The character feels only minor pain that does not affect his actions.

Stage two, the quickening:

By now the bodies of the fiend and character are beginning to transpose. There

(continued page 18)

Table 1: Effects of the Transposition Process

Baatezu	Gehreleth
Erinyes *stage 1:* Skin becomes smooth and perfect, all scars, moles, and other disfiguring marks disappear (+1 to Charisma). *stage 2:* Grows to 6' in height, while features become beautiful (+2 Charisma). Develops a craving to devour live animals (witnesses make *horror* checks). *stage 3:* Subject can cause *fear* (as per the spell) in anyone who gazes upon her. Back grows glossy feathers. *stage 4:* Subject grows the beginnings of wings. Subject is almost unrecognizably beautiful (+4 Charisma).	**Faratsu** *stage 1:* Hands and arms grow bizarrely large (–1 Charisma, +1 Strength). *stage 2:* Skin fades to a sickly gray in color, grows claws (–2 to Charisma, +1 damage to unarmed attacks). *stage 3:* Can cause *weakness* (reverse of *strength*) 3/day, body mass grows denser (base AC 8). *stage 4.* Body elongates and muscles become grotesquely pronounced (–4 Charisma, +2 Strength).
Gelugon *stage 1:* Eyes bulge prominently and skin becomes scaly (–1 Charisma, base AC is 7). *stage 2:* Teeth become sharp pincers (–2 Charisma, +1 damage in unarmed combat). *stage 3:* Eyes become multi-faceted, can see in total darkness. Grows long claws (–3 Charisma, +2 damage in unarmed combat). *stage 4:* Grows antennae, body grows larger and insectoid in shape (–4 Charisma, +3 Strength).	**Kelubar** *stage 1:* Body gives off offensive odors (–1 Charisma). *stage 2:* Nails and teeth grow long and are coated with a weak acidic slime (–2 Charisma, +4 damage in unarmed combat). *stage 3.* Body begins to expand outward becoming bulbous and ungainly. Body secretes an odoriferous slime so vile anyone within 30' must save vs. poison or become incapacitated for 1-10 rounds (–4 Charisma). *stage 4:* Body girth increases until subject weighs nearly 500 pounds. Vestigial bat-like wings form (Strength +3)
Pit Fiend *stage 1:* Body develops patches of large, red scales (–2 Charisma, base AC is 6). *stage 2:* Grows large, green fangs (–3 Charisma, +1 to unarmed combat). *stage 3:* Fangs secrete venom, upper body grows grotesquely massive. (2d6 points damage save vs. poison or die results in bite attack, +2 Strength). *stage 4:* Body completely covered in scales, features resemble gargoyle, grows bat-like wings (–4 Charisma, base AC 2)	**Shator** *stage 1:* Earlobes drop off. Ear holes expand (–1 Charisma, +2 surprise bonus). *stage 2:* Skin begins to sag into folds of flesh, jaw expands and muscles become more pronounced (–2 Charisma, +2 Strength). *stage 3:* Touch acts as *ray of enfeeblement.* *stage 4:* Body expands to 560 pounds (–4 Charisma, +4 Strength).

Table 1: Effects of the Transposition Process

Tanar'ri	Yugoloth
Balor *stage 1:* Grow sharp talons (–1 Charisma, +2 damage to unarmed attacks). *stage 2:* Skin turns a deep, fiery red color and becomes warm to the touch (–2 Charisma, base AC 7). *stage 3:* Eyes turn solid red; all who see subject's eye must make a fear check (–3 Charisma, automatically *detects invisibility.)* *stage 4:* Grows vestigial wings, body starts to emit flames (–4 Charisma, 2d6 damage per round to anyone touching subject's body).	**Arcanoloth** *stage 1:* Ears become pointed and furry, but very keen (–1 Charisma, +4 or +20% on hear noise rolls). *stage 2:* Body grows fur and face takes on jackal features (–2 Charisma). *stage 3:* Grows poisonous claws (1d4 damage each and a –1 penalty, cumulative per hit, on victim's attack rolls). *stage 4:* Head entirely transformed into that of a constantly snarling jackal (all who see subject must make fear checks; can *warp wood* at will).
Nabassu *stage 1:* Eyes turn entirely steel gray in color (–1 Charisma). *stage 2:* Skin turns gray and leathery (–2 Charisma, base AC 8). *stage 3:* Must consume raw flesh to survive, can cause *darkness, 15' radius* at will *stage 4:* Grows to 7' in height and features warp to resemble a gargoyle (–4 Charisma, +4 damage from increased Strength)	**Nycaloth** *stage 1:* Grows sharp, thick claws (–1 Charisma, +2 damage in unarmed combat). *stage 2:* Skin turns a sickly shade of green and becomes cracked and leathery (–2 Charisma, –1 Dexterity, Base AC 7) *stage 3:* Claws grow larger (cause 1d8 points of damage and seeping wounds that bleed for 1d6 damage per round until magically healed). *stage 4:* Body grows huge and gargoyle-like, must consume decaying flesh daily (witnesses must make fear and horror checks, +4 damage to all attacks).
Succubus *stage 1:* Skin becomes smooth and creamy (+1 Charisma). *stage 2:* Physical senses heighten and eyes begin to glow (+2 to surprise). *stage 3:* Voice becomes compelling (+2 Charisma, can *charm person* at will). *stage 4:* Develops vestigial bat wings even as beauty increases dramatically (+4 Charisma, but cause *horror* check in anyone who glimpses the wing buds)	**Yagnoloth** *stage 1:* Ears grow large and wing-like (–1 Charisma). *stage 2:* One arm grows to giant-sized (–2 Charisma, +2 Strength). *stage 3:* Skin becomes red and scaly (–3 Charisma), can use *shocking grasp* 3/day. *stage 4:* Facial features and body become grotesquely twisted and utterly disproportionate to one another and a normal body, breath turns acidic (can cause 2d6 damage to exposed skin 3/day)

is at least some obvious physical change in the character. The pain of the transposition increases, giving the character a +1 penalty to all physical actions.

Stage three, the malformation:
At this level, the character's body is warped to the extent that he is capable of using one of the fiend's powers. The minds of fiend and character are so closely connected that the fiend may place seemingly natural thoughts into the character's mind. The character's alignment begins to reflect that of the fiend. The level of physical pain caused by the vicious warping of the character's body now makes it difficult to concentrate at all, giving him a +1 penalty to *all* proficiency and ability checks.

Stage four, the sublimation:
As the transposition nears completion, the character's body shape now changes dramatically. Besides the physical changes, the character usually gains another fiendish ability. If the character is not already evil, he now becomes so. The fiend has at least as much control over the body as the character does, and the character must make a successful Wisdom check to complete any actions of which the fiend disapproves. The pain of tremendous bodily changes gives the character a +2 penalty to all proficiency and ability checks (including Wisdom) checks.

Stage five, the transposition:
By now the fiend has completed the transposition. The character (even player characters) are normally assumed to meet a horrendous fate on the Outer Planes. The fiend now walks the Demiplane of Dread.

Reversal of Transposition

Once a fiend has transposed its body with that of its mortal dupe, it is most certainly impossible to reverse the process; the fiend is within our realm, the horror upon us. However, as explained above, the process of transposition is not immediate.

Between the time when the mortal first draws the fiend's attention and the time when the final convulsions have ceased and the fiend is "reborn" among us, I believe it is possible to cut off or reverse the transposition process. From my studies thus far, I have determined that there are at least two discrete ways in which the transposition process might be reversed and the fiend's contact with our homeland severed.

It is infinitely preferable to repel a fiend before it can enter our land. I believe the chance of success in such an endeavor is much higher than that of attempting to expel a fiend already present, and of course there is the chance of redeeming the human host.

Repulsion

During the earlier stages of transposition, a powerful priest of good may be invaluable in forcing a fiend to relinquish its hold on its mortal subject's body and, thus, its key to our land.

For this reason, it is essential to stay vigilant, watching for all reports of strange transformations of either personality or physical form. Such transformations will most likely be the result of some physical malady, an infirm mind, or based on some minor incident that has been blown out of proportion through its telling and retelling in drinking establishment. Even though there is only the smallest chance that the case identifies an individual who has begun the process of transposition, the gravity of such a possibility requires that this diagnosis be kept in mind until it can be refuted to one's complete satisfaction.

Should it appear that a transposition is occurring, the subject should be brought to a

powerful priest for spiritual healing. Even if you are incorrect in your assessment, and the subject is suffering from some physical malady, the attentions of a priest can only help improve the unfortunate's condition. Keep in mind, though, that if the subject truly is undergoing transposition, he may well be unwilling to allow anyone to examine him, let alone a priest.

But you must act quickly and decisively, for time is of the essence, as this account by Zimmian of Darkon illustrates:

Bilius the tailor was brought to the temple yesterday evening, barely recognizable as human. His body had grown strangely insectile—even the eyes glaring up at me were multi-faceted! Stubby antennae grew from his balding pate, and reddish scales covered his body. Likewise, his teeth and fingernails had grown all out of proportion. I confess the sight filled me with revulsion and a near-mindless desire to destroy the monstrosity into which poor Bilius was transforming. It is a failing I regret, for I am uncertain whether it affected my attempt to stop the dread transformation.

Bilius was clearly not in his right mind, for he did not wish to be treated for his terrible condition. It was only luck that two young holy warriors (including Aphram Fendwell, who somehow recognized Bilius) heard his hissing screams coming from a shack in the wilderness. They sustained injuries, but managed to bring him here.

An hour ago I performed my most powerful spell on Bilius. However, instead of reversing the terrible transformation, my efforts caused him to writhe in greater agony. Our eyes locked, and a look of profoundly intelligent evil transformed Bilius' face more than the scales and fangs ever could. Just before he disappeared altogether, vanishing into thin air, the creature, that I believed to be Bilius smiled, even through his—its—dire agony.

I do not know whether Bilius and whatever evil presence was consuming him were destroyed in my attempt to cast it out, or

whether I have merely shunted it into some other priest's domain. Such strong evil as I saw in Bilius' eyes is rarely destroyed so easily.
—Zimmian of Darkon, Church Records.

At some point, it may no longer be possible to reverse a transposition through clerical magic. Instead, the subject may either be consumed by the competing energies of good and evil, or transported to some other area in the Land of the Mists. I am unsure which of these scenarios is most likely. Unfortunately, powerful clerical spells that are healing in nature have been known to drive away creatures of evil, but seldom to destroy them. Therefore, I believe that once the transposition nears completion, the subject reacts to such spells as would a creature of evil (such as a vampire or lich), in which case it is more likely that Bilius was merely transported to somewhere else within the land to complete the transposition process.

Repulsion

Once a fiend has turned its fell attentions upon a character it is very difficult to stop the transposition process from reaching its dread conclusion. However, it is possible to reverse the process and repulse the fiend from the character's body before the transposition is complete. This may be accomplished in one of two ways.

Holy Word: If a priest born in the RAVENLOFT setting casts a *holy word* spell upon a fiend-ridden character, at stage three or before, the spell forces the fiend back to its home plane. The victim must make a successful system shock roll to survive this process. If successful, the victim survives, but all physical deformities caused by the partially completed transposition remain. If the roll is failed, the victim dies.

A surviving victim is still somewhat warped emotionally and psychically by the experience, so he is considered to be at the same *stage of evil* as whatever stage of transposition had been reached when the fiend's hold on him was severed. Thus, if the character was at Stage Three of transposition, he is now treated as if he had failed three regular Dark Powers checks (see *Realm of Terror, Chapter IV* in the RAVENLOFT New Edition Campaign Setting for more information on the results of failed Dark Powers checks).

If *holy word* is cast on a character at stage four in the transposition process, the spell randomly transports the character to some other area in the Demiplane. At this point, the character is as much fiend as mortal, and reacts to the spell accordingly (see *Realm of Terror, Chapter VI*).

Note that priests who originally hailed from outside the Land of Mists cannot use this spell while in Ravenloft.

Banishment: Dr. Van Richten does not realize it, but this 7th-level wizard spell functions in much the same way as *holy word* does. The fiend receives a saving throw vs. spells with a +4 modifier to resist the spell, but *banishment* may be attempted by all wizards, even those not native to the Demiplane of Dread.

At Stage Four, a successful *banishment* will merely transport the character/fiend to some other random point in Ravenloft.

Although Dr. Van Richten hints that other clerical spells might be helpful in stopping the transposition process (such as *heal*), this is not so.

Redemption

Although it may seem unlikely that an individual who has committed acts evil enough to draw the attention of a fiend would be able—or even willing—to cast the fiend out of himself, the possibility of such redemption is not as far-fetched as it might at first seem.

I: ENTERING THE LAND

Ninth of June,

I am certain I have just witnessed the repulsion of a fiend attempting to trade bodies with a mortal! Christopher's ears had dropped off and his skin dripped in folds from his bones—even his muscles had begun to grow! It was just as described in Book IV, Ch XII of The Madrigorian. *Yet when the priest cried out and thrust his holy symbol at Christopher's thickening form, he began to shrink, and the skin reattached itself to the bone. Even more, the humanity returned to his eyes . . .*

—Aimon Davidovich, personal notes.

We are all capable of both good and evil. Even the most wicked blackguard can turn back to the path of light, as I myself have witnessed.

The path to redemption is a lonely one. It is also necessarily unique for each individual. No two persons could cast off the influence of a fiend through the same exact actions; there is no magic formula to aid such unfortunates in their task. However, it is safe to say that, as with all acts of penitence and atonement, performing acts of good at least as great as the acts of evil that began the individual's degradation, would certainly be antithetical to a fiend. Likewise, refusing to participate or initiate evil acts should also weaken the link between fiend and mortal. Just as a bat or other creature of the darkness draws back when faced with the light, so, too, should a creature of absolute evil, such as a fiend, shrink from good within its host. Logic dictates that a host who works diligently and faithfully to purge him or herself of evil would not be an appropriate vehicle for transposition.

Unfortunately, it is not a simple matter to turn away from evil, and if the transposition is at all advanced, the fiend will undoubtedly attempt to foil efforts to reverse the process; not only must the unfortunate host combat his own inclinations toward evil but those of the fiend as well.

Although I have little to go on but philosophy and my own observations of those who have struggled with the evil in their natures, such a process undoubtedly has its own dangers when it involves a fiendish presence. It is even conceivable that a single false step could lead to oblivion for the mortal and triumph for the fiend.

Despite the potential hazard, the dangers inherent in *not* making such an attempt are obvious; it is a question of probable failure versus certain destruction. Those who witness such a struggle can perform no task more worthy than to encourage the penitent in his darkest hour of need.

Redemption

Redemption of a character is theoretically possible at any point until Stage Five–when the transposition is complete.

To repel the fiend from his body, the victim must commit acts of good comparable to the acts of evil that first attracted the fiend to him. These acts force open the fiend's hold on the character, and it will do all it can to foil its victim's efforts.

This process follows the guidelines given under **Redemption** in the *Realm of Terror* book from the RAVENLOFT New Edition Campaign Setting. However, should the character fail even one "redemption check," the physical and psychic strain on both fiend and character requires a system shock roll. Should the character survive, the transposition process is immediately completed and the fiend arrives in Ravenloft. If the check is failed, the character dies, but in death achieves a manner of victory, as the fiend is kept from its goal.

Summoning

Available evidence demonstrates that fiends may be summoned to the Land of the Mists against their will by the working of powerful magic. Summoning is the second way that fiends gain access to our lands and our lives.

The magic of the summoning process pulls

the fiend into our world, rather than the fiend taking the time to leisurely select a target and move into the emptiness created by evil acts and the process of transposition. In both cases, the weaknesses in the hearts of men allows the fiend access to the Land of the Mists, and in both cases, the fiend exacts a terrible price from the mortal.

Those who wish to cleanse our lands of the blight of evil should find the treatment of magical summoning rituals in this section quite useful, but before we can move to the discussion of *how* fiends are summoned, we need to briefly examine *why* fiends are summoned. The answer as to *why* is not as obvious as it might seem.

Hubris and the Academician

In a perfect world, those who wield power would always do so with wisdom. Leaders of our nations, leaders of our churches and universities, powerful mages, and mighty warriors would use their power for the common good. Yet, harsh experience has proven time and again that no special wisdom comes with the mantle of leadership or circumstance that gives a man power over his fellows.

Those who walk at the forefront of our society display the same qualities, from wisdom to folly, kindness to cruelty, and humility to deadly pride, which are found among the mass of the common man. With their prominence, however, their personal distinctions and failings often have far-reaching consequences, particularly when they allow self-pride to affect their judgment and overwhelm their common sense.

I know the temptation to allow pride in one's work, to allow one to hold oneself up as superior to the common man. I have spent half my life traveling the realms, cataloguing and hunting creatures of darkness. I have seen many horrible things and suffered much, and on occasion, when weary of the battle or frustrated by a clever foe, I take the attitude that this entitles me to special treatment by my fellows for whom I "have sacrificed so much." But then a biting quip from one of my outspoken and strong-willed companions reminds me that I merely do what I do to contribute to the best of my abilities to the betterment of the lot of my fellow man. In this sense I am no different than, and no doubt in some cases inferior to, those tradesmen who toil at their crafts to produce valued goods for their fellows. My intellect and learning is to me as a hammer and cutting tool is to a cobbler.

Sadly, many of my peers fail to recognize the value of humility and do not heed, or cannot hear, those voices that would remind them of their place among humanity. Some turn their minds to glory, to the thought that they will make some momentous discovery that will leave their names splashed boldly on the pages of the histories, a shining vision for those who follow them on the path to knowledge. Others, in their pride, believe they have the capacity to control any happenstance, and that they may reach beyond the borders of the unknown and pluck the deepest mysteries from the bosom of science at no cost.

In some instances, these colleagues succeed where it would have been better if they had not. Those who struggle with concepts or powers beyond their understanding often act most unwisely, allowing their foolish desires and the weaknesses of their all too human hearts to govern their actions. Such men and women are not necessarily evil, even if they have allowed their intellectual pursuits to be misdirected by the baser side of their nature.

A mage or priest is particularly vulnerable to the temptation to explore blindly, and thus to leave himself open to the power of the fiend. Whether due to overweening pride, lust for power, or an unshakable certainty that they can control any situation, even these learned individuals make the foolish and generally fatal mistake of commencing the study of summoning magical creatures with a mind to harnessing their extraordinary power.

Of course, the summoner may as well seek to stem the tide with a soup spoon as to channel or

control the power of a fiend. Yet, as a fool will often persist in his folly until utter ruination ensues, so too will a mage or priest caught up in the thrill of their studies. When these misguided fools, whose intellects have outstripped their judgment, actually summon a fiend, they will know their error too late.

The Mechanics of Summoning

While there is no question that those who would dabble in such matters will do so without my encouragement, for my peace of mind I need to make clear that my words and collected information are not intended to be used to launch an attempt to summon a fiend to our lands.

I have not provided the following to aid the foolish in their quest to summon magical creatures, but so that the wise can recognize such activity and act appropriately before it is too late. For, unlike most deeds of darkness, the act of summoning a creature from beyond our world is unmistakable in its prelude.

The physical process of attempting to summon a fiend requires great erudition, considerable resources, and powerful magic. The process of preparing the site for the ritual involves weeks of painstaking work and involves the expenditure of great sums of money. It is my understanding that most of this expense goes to defray the tremendous costs of the magical inks used to inscribe the appropriate runes upon the floor of the area which is to contain the creature. Indeed, this process has two distinct parts, the effort to summon the creature to this realm, and the effort to control the creature once it has arrived. Both of these stages are crucial, and require very advanced magical ability.

The spell required to control the summoned creature is known to mages as the spell of *binding*. My advisors on subjects magical inform me that this spell, when cast, is directed against one particular creature. The purpose of this enchantment is to restrain the actions of this creature, and to protect the caster and his surroundings. Without this spell, any summoned creature would immediately be free to wreak whatever havoc it desires

Binding is a spell that can only be wielded by powerful mages with access to the Eighth Circle of spells. The physical process of mixing the inks, crafting the scrolls and manufacturing the other components required takes weeks of intense and painstaking effort. These components are used to craft a circular diagram upon the floor of the area in question, using mystic symbols, chants and gestures known only to the initiate.

The actual process of summoning the creature is not nearly as time-consuming, although it is just as tense as the weeks of preparation work that has gone before. The summoning ritual, or spell, is a closely guarded secret known only to certain mages with access to spells of the Ninth Circle, so my advisors were understandably reluctant to impart any information. However, as I understand it, the magics create an opening between our world and the mystical realms beyond what some term the "misty border."

> *I would have once said that absolute evil was as impossible as absolute good. I no longer believe in such convenient words as "impossible." For this night I have looked into the eyes of the Fiend, and nothing can ever be the same.*
>
> *The seething, twitching monstrosity, with its pale eyes and toothsome mouth, is gone for now. I have driven it off with the last of my strength. I have no more.*
>
> *My spells were enough to give me life this night, but the Fiend has looked into me and I can still hear its scraping voice, peeling away my brain. . .*
>
> *"I am in you and you are in me . . . how can you hide from yourself?"*
>
> *I cannot.*
>
> *Gods help me, I cannot.*
>
> *—Anonymous letter left on church pew.*

This magical *gate* allows, or rather, according to one of my advisors, *forces* the fiend to step into our realm—presumably into the middle of the circle inscribed during the *binding* ritual.

Summoned Fiends

While various mages and other obsessed fools undoubtedly try and fail for much of their lives in their efforts to summon and trap a fiend, documentary evidence does establish conclusively that there is at least one fiend in Ravenloft today who was originally summoned to our lands by a tragically misguided man. A priest known as Micah of the Order of Tramalaine, apparently successfully brought the fiend to the Land of the Mists, but failed utterly to control it. I recount this tale, because it, and its consequences, serves as an object lesson as to why we must be ever-alert and act to prevent summoning attempts while they are in preparation.

I write these lines, to record the strange passing of Brother Micah, a good and holy man. Micah ever strove to expand the frontiers of knowledge, but it may be that he reached too far into the depths of the unknown and encountered that which man was not meant to know.

It was past the second bell last night, approaching the hour of the sunrise service, but lights still burned in the tower. This was not unusual, for Micah would often burn the lamps late into the night. With hindsight, we should have seen that Micah had become even more distant and elusive than before. He missed many meals and barely exchanged words of greeting in the halls. But all seemed normal until the quiet of the night was shattered by an explosion from Micah's laboratory.

The compound shook with explosions, broken glass, rending stone, terrible roars, and the

sound of a man screaming in horror. The noise suddenly stopped, and we gathered at the foot of the stairs and proceeded with haste up into the tower, lead by the abbot and the most Reverend Jacoby. The scene was one of complete destruction.

The tables, bookcases, books and equipment were scattered and burned. The walls themselves were charred as if they had been exposed to a great flame; much of the glassware had fused together. Pieces of stone had been torn from the walls and floor, and deep furrows in the stone ran six abreast throughout. The room was empty. Only the remnants of assorted sigils scribed onto the floor and walls, and the charred remains of Micah's notes, showed what had occurred before the end.

I can determine no more than that Micah was engaged in some sort of summoning of a power that we have never seen. I will record Micah's symbols and notes below, that perhaps someday a learned reader may understand. Micah is gone, and we fear that he will never return.

—Monsignor Arbatus of Termaia,
Order of Tramalaine.

My examination of the transcribed portions of these notes and symbols leads me to believe that this unfortunate monk attempted to summon and control a fiend. He obviously failed in the latter aim.

Evidence suggests that fiends have an amazing fortitude in the face of magic effects upon their persons, something discussed at length in Chapter Two. It is likely, and my advisors in things magical agree, that the spell of *binding* is an unreliable defense against a fiend

Cross-referencing the date of the incident involving Micah with other accounts leads me to conclude that the creature he summoned is the fiend later known as the Beast of Ehrendton, a monster made moderately famous by a book of the same name.

Alternative Theories of Origin

While the preceding sections discuss the means by which misguided and foolish individuals attempt to summon fiends into their presence and control them, it does not address a key issue regarding fiends: Where do fiends originate?.

If one accepts the theory that there are other "planes of existence," other worlds along-side and apart from our own, then there is barely a need to ask that question. However, I have no doubt that some readers find themselves reluctant to subscribe to such fanciful ideas. While skepticism in the face of unsubstantiated claims is to be encouraged, in this case skepticism may lead to disregard of a potential threat to us all.

Believing that our reality is the only plane of existence, can easily lead one to disregard the would-be summoner as a fool caught up in a harmless fantasy. After all, a being that is summoned must certainly arrive from elsewhere, and if there is no "elsewhere," then the being cannot be summoned. However, what if the magic during the summoning ritual, actually summons the fiend *into existence*?

Demilich Evolution and Summoning

I have seen clerics, both holy and foul, raise the spirits of the dead and then dismiss them back to the shadowy realms of the afterlife. The spirits of the dead rarely seem pleased to be summoned back into the realms of the living. It is likely that the free-roaming spirit of the demilich, neither alive nor dead, is captured and forced back into a physical form by the powerful magics of the summoner.

As I ponder this possibility, it seems to fit well with the chronicled activities of some fiends. Drigor, for example, has devoted much effort to escape from our reality, because it chafes on him like a tight collar. It seems likely that after experiencing the total freedom of existing only as a spirit, the demilich wants desperately to

return to that state. The fact that Drigor and other fiends appear to be seeking ways to escape our existence might further support this theory. However, what this theory doesn't account for is transposition. If fiends are indeed an evolution of the demilich, why do they take steps to assume a physical form that will, without doubt, limit them, no matter how powerful it may be?

The Step-child and Summoning

Natural scientists have identified any number of creatures that lie dormant, either in pupal stages or some other protective state, until a specific natural event occurs. Oft I have found that physical phenomena have a parallel in the realm of magic—that hazy sphere of forces and energies from which wizards and magical creatures draw their power.

It seems possible, then, that under rare circumstances, the powerful magical forces unleashed during a summoning attempt interacts with the negative psychic energies generated by all the evil in our land, giving that evil form and bringing to conclusion the gestation of the living nightmares that are fiends, causing them to spring wholly into being.

Accepting this theory, however, might lead to the false conclusion that any race capable of generating enough evil to spawn a fiend is receiving the punishment they deserve. This could not be further from the truth! Fiends do not punish the evil, they encourage it, and try their utmost to snuff out all that is good in our tortured land as they do. It is the innocent and those who try to resist the fiend who suffer the brunt of their evil. There is no justice or moral imperative served by the existence of fiends.

Powerful magics can indeed summon a fiend to Ravenloft. This foolhardy endeavor will almost invariably spell disaster for any foolish enough to attempt it, and it is an act of such evil that it would cause multiple Dark Powers checks for any player character involved in such an effort.

While there may be other methods to summon a fiend to the realms, Dr. Van Richten describes the method most likely to meet with success. The great intellect of most fiends renders the use of the *ensnarement* spell a laughable effort, which fiends will normally only answer if they desire to step through and punish the fool who dared to disturb them. Note that when fiends do respond to this spell voluntarily, they are still trapped in the Land of the Mists.

The preferred method combines the *gate* and *binding* spells in an effort to summon and control the fiend. The unique nature of Ravenloft certainly affects the summoning process. As noted in *Realm of Terror* from the boxed campaign setting, the *gate* spell may bring creatures into the Land of the Mists, but they are then trapped there.

The magic resistance of the fiend does protect it against both the *gate* spell and the effects of the *binding* (giving it the appropriate chance to remain unaffected). In addition, a fiend who is aware that it is being drawn to Ravenloft, and is aware of the peculiar nature of the demiplane (most are not), receives an additional bonus of +10% if it desires to resist the summons. Enlightened fiends will fight with every ounce of their being to avoid being trapped in Ravenloft.

Even if a mortal is successful in controlling the fiend, this relationship with such a creature makes riding a tiger appear tame! The fiend will always work to undermine the caster to the best of its ability, and *will* have its revenge one day.

II: Observed Powers

I find that it is very rare for a mortal to comprehend the powers of the Great Ones. It may well be that most of us are simply incapable of doing so. The magics of wizards and the arrows of warriors are as nothing to them. They brush them aside and laugh heartily at our mortal impudence and foolishness. It is truly futile to oppose them, for they can shape the very land while they walk. Those who understand these facts will serve them. Those who do not will be crushed in their path. To each, his just reward.

—The Madrigorian, Book II, Chapter III.

It is essential to make every effort to understand an adversary, particularly one as powerful and dangerous as the fiend, before venturing forth to do battle. Every hunter knows that to be successful, he must know the ways of his prey; its nature, habits and abilities. This takes on even greater weight when faced with "prey" that is far more powerful and intelligent than most of its predators!

We turn now to the question that must leap to the minds of all those who would battle fiends. Namely, what are their powers and abilities, and how may they be countered? Although the information gathered by my sources and myself is sparse when compared with the voluminous materials a dedicated researcher can amass on vampires or werebeasts, what there is of it quite reasonably addresses fiendish powers.

Nonetheless, the uncertainty over the extent of the abilities of these monstrosities cannot be overstressed. Much of the information in this work is only educated speculation, or extrapolation from what *is* known, for a number of difficulties have hindered the effort to produce a definitive study of the fiend.

First, opportunities to study the nature of fiends have been few. Blessedly, fiends are most rare in our land.

Another obstacle to definitive pronouncements is that our available information suggests that each fiend is a unique creature. Each fiend differs greatly from the next, not only in form, but in powers, attitudes and purpose. Therefore, this catalogued information, obtained by brave folk at a great price, may not apply to a particular fiendish adversary. Indeed, the single greatest point to remember when facing any fiend is that it undoubtedly will do the unexpected. It is wise to endeavor to prepare for almost any eventuality.

Common Powers

I have reiterated the individuality of fiends so frequently in the text that the sober-minded reader may begin to suspect that the fiend is no genus at all, but merely an arbitrary grouping of creatures by a poor researcher. However, it is possible to make certain generalities about the fiends thus far encountered. This is true much in the same way that careful study of the human race has lead to general conclusions which hold true for all men, despite the differences found from individual to individual.

A Note to the Reader

In penning my Guide to Fiends *I have been forced to rely largely on the works of others to divine the powers of these foul beings. In order to credit these sources properly, and provide the reader with the opportunity for further study of this arcane subject, I have used academic notes throughout this text. The bibliography provided lists complete information on these sources. My thanks to my esteemed colleagues, Dr. Ernst Manhof professor emeritus at the University of Il Aluk, and Dr. Ottelie Farringer.*

II: OBSERVED POWERS

All fiends share certain types of powers. For the purposes of this work, common abilities have been grouped into five broad categories: visual acuity, elemental immunities, weapons immunities, resistance to spells, and magic-like abilities.

Visual Acuity

There is little that escapes the notice of a fiend. Not only are they exceptionally intelligent and perceptive beings, but they seem possessed with visual ability that far exceeds that of humans. According to those who study the biological sciences, these abilities often far exceed those of demihumans as well. [Ephraim Joonker and Legothlin Greenleaf, *Heightened Reality: The Sensory Powers of Sentient Non-Humans* [2]]

A survey of all available texts describing encounters with fiends also confirms that fiends have exceptional vision[2]. The range of their vision seems to perceive both heat and, perhaps, cold. In addition, fiends seem able to see far greater distances than humans.

Of course, the fiend's ability to perceive its adversaries in darkness may be no more than the power which many demihuman races have to perceive the heat patterns that living flesh emits[2]. There is no direct evidence to confirm or deny the ability of the fiend to see normally in cold, pitch darkness as does the lich, but it is wise to assume that the cover of darkness does *not* provide safety from these malevolent creatures, as this excerpt shows.

I could hear it coming through the darkness, hear the scrape of its claws on the stone floor and its breath rasping far down the hall. It wasn't even trying to be silent, for it knew that it had naught to fear from the likes of us! The blood of our four valiant comrades was spread over the creature's body and the floor of the keep in silent testimony to its power.

Jess and I crouched behind the barrels of moldy grain in the darkest corner of the storage room and tried to even think quietly! I heard its wings scrape along the wall and its whip hiss against the stone as it came; its bulk nearly filled the corridor. It laughed and taunted us as cowards! Mayhap that is true, but we were not fools, and we stayed still.

Suddenly, the noise stopped, and though I knew it was close, it was a long time before a shift of shadow told me that the thing was in this very room.

"I see you there, you pathetic fools! You cower in vain!" Its voice echoed inside my skull. I could feel it staring holes through me, scouring my soul while time stood still. And then it turned, chuckling, and walked away. "Tell them about me . . . tell them all about me. Let them know that it is futile to oppose me!"

—Sir Armand Ironhand,
The Beast of Ehrendton.

All fiends have infravision that extends to a range of 120' in Ravenloft. In addition, the natural vision of the fiend is enhanced so that he can see in complete darkness as if in full daylight. The connection between the evil of the land and that of the fiend serve to sharpen the fiend's already keen vision.

Elemental Immunities

Given the extraordinary abilities of the fiend and its unknown origins, it is not surprising that their physiologies are very different from those of the natural inhabitants of the Land. The fiend seems naturally hardy and less vulnerable to extremes of temperature than humans or even demihumans. Whether this is due to the will of a summoner, the land itself, or to the tempering of an unimaginably harsh native environment, is unknown. However, this amazing constitution is readily observable to anyone unfortunate enough to encounter a fiend.

This resistance to the elements goes far beyond a resistance to extremes of temperature.

II: Observed Powers

The available evidence suggests that fiends are in fact completely immune to the effects of heat and cold, including those attack forms that rely on these elements. The following brief discussions provide examples of such immunities.

Fire

Both research and my personal experience suggest that fiends are immune to the affects of natural fire. Whether this resistance is a magical ability or results from an unnatural toughness of skin, its effect is clear. The account below provides a representative tale.

We saw the smoke from the fields; and Samael, Clem and me run in as quick as we could. It looked like a big one, and as we got close we could see that like unto half of Creeana was on fire. As we rounded onto the main street, we seen the body of Thomas the Smith. He was stretched out in the road with his hammer in his hand and his insides become his outsides. Through the smoke we saw a few other bodies, and the only live folks we saw was runnin' for the woodline a good ways away.

We didn't know about no war, and we might have run too, if we hadn't of heard the screams of 'Becca and the babies from Samael's house So down the street we ran, screamin' like we was back at Dargal Pass and swallowin' real hard to keep our breath coming. As we got near the house, the screams stopped, and we saw a man coming out the door of the burning house He was holding a bloody pike and whistlin' a pretty tune.

He stopped when he saw us and smiled real strange. Clem froze, but me and Samael charged the bugger. That's when he changed. All of a sudden he was big, bigger than any man, and he didn't look like a man no more. His skin was all black and tough like horsehide, stretched out real tight all over his body like it could barely cover his bones without cracking. His teeth were real big, and he had a horn growin' out of the back of his head. He still had the pike, in bony hands with huge red claws, and his skin had this red kinda slimy stuff all over it. He was still whistlin'.

Samael got to him first, and his heart was running the show, not his head. Instead of teaming up, he charged into it, and knocked them both back into his burning home. The monster was standing in the fire, flames licking up all around it, but he didn't pay no mind. He smiled as he piked Samael to the ground and clawed him apart, whistling while the roof fell in around his head.

—Recorded by Ashlan of Il Aluk, as told by Jared Tinkerson.

My personal observations confirm this immunity to fiery attack. In our eventual battle against Drigor, I had thought to use a special concoction that I had secured from an alchemist of my acquaintance. This potion consisted of a sticky, sap-like substance which ignites when exposed to the air, and burns for a period of some minutes before consuming itself. The adhesive qualities of the ointment would cause it to adhere to whatever surface the glass vials containing it broke against.

The ointment worked as advertised, but to my horror, it had no perceptible effect upon the fiend! Three of our vials burst against its form at the commencement of the fray, but it continued to fight while they burned on its form, suffering no apparent ill effect. In fact, Drigor even laughed when, at first, I merely stood and gaped at this phenomenon. It scooped up some of the substance with its fingers, and licked its hand clean, as if to prove its complete contempt for my feeble attack!

While I was aware of the reports regarding normal flame, I had hypothesized that this more potent form might do a fiend harm. Let this tale be a warning to all those who battle the forces of darkness that they must be prepared to accept any eventuality with equanimity, having multiple plans of attack in readiness when attempting to best a fiend. My shock at the failure of the

ointment was so great that Drigor could easily have taken my head off whilst I stood gaping like a child at a circus. I survived only because he chose to mock me instead. I swear that the fiend shall one day have cause to regret that bit of pomposity.

All fiends are immune to fire except the Farastu, the weakest gehreleth. Farastu suffer only half damage from flames.

Cold

Given the resistance of the fiend to high temperature extremes, it is to be expected that it would be more vulnerable to cold. At least, creatures in nature who have adapted to one temperature extreme based on their environment often have no tolerance for the opposite extreme. Yet it appears fiends are also immune to the lower extremes of temperature.

During another encounter with the Whistling Fiend, recorded once again by Ashlan of Il Aluk as he followed the creature's swath of destruction through Darkon, we find a dramatic example of this immunity.

". . . . and when my master ordered the man from his courtyard, that's when he stopped whistling for the first time. Instead he started laughing. He doubled over with laughter.

The master doesn't like laughter, especially not when he thinks its directed at him, so he decided to teach the cad a lesson. I heard him mutter the incantation for ice storm and I ducked down behind a barrel. "Laugh at this," the master shouted as he unleashed the spell.

But then the whistling started again. When I looked, the stranger was walking through the raging storm of hail and ice as if it was nothing! He was twirling his pike above his head and whistling. He suddenly caught the pike and lunged forward; the master didn't even have a chance to scream before he was run through and pinned to the wall.

The stranger went into the school, and the screams of the other apprentices soon drowned out that horrid whistling.

—Recorded by Ashlan of Il Aluk, as told by Pendia Kunster.

Once, when battling a lich, I was unfortunate enough to be targeted by an *ice storm* spell, and I almost did not survive the experience. Any creature that can whistle merrily in the face of an *ice storm* must plainly be unaffected by it. It should be noted that the attack forms which concentrate cold in sufficient strength to be damaging are all magical. Thus, the apparent resistance of the fiend to cold may be related to its resistance to spells, discussed below. This resistance is not complete, so do not abandon an attack which is based on cold. It may prove successful.

Fiends in general are partially resistant to the effects of cold. Most baatezu, tanar'ri and ghereleths suffer only one-half damage from cold-based attacks. Yugoloths, however, who normally suffer double damage from cold-based attacks, take only normal damage while in Ravenloft. Although the above information should suffice for staging encounters, DM's can find more information in the *PLANESCAPE Monstrous Compendium.*

Immunity to Poison

As far as we can determine, the fiend has a completely different physiology than a mortal. Therefore, it is very uncertain that any substance which we know to be poisonous would in fact have any adverse effects upon a fiend. [Daffyd Kelman, *Comparative Toxicology: Pestilence, Poisons and Plague Between the Species*[3]]. Recorded battles with fiends seem to support this hypothesis.

For example, Hataras the Quiet, a veteran hunter and warrior, who has often stood beside me in my battles against evil, once related a tale

to me of a creature he came upon in his wanderings. From his description of the monstrosity, I believe Hataras encountered the Whistling Fiend.

While Hataras is a good soul, his pragmatism, regrettably, often defeats his principles when fighting evil. He informed me that he had coated his blades with an exotic and deadly poison derived from mushrooms and toad extract found in the deepest swamps of Lamordia. However, it did not appear that his opponent suffered any ill effects from this deadly poison, and Hataras barely escaped with his life from that encounter. The creature appeared none the worse for wear, continuing its whistling despite several deep slashes with the poisoned blade.

All fiends are immune to all known poisons and toxins.

Weapon Immunities

Many evil creatures are immune to the effects of many weapons that would harm or kill a normal man. This immunity is also common to many undead beings, as well as to magical creatures such as the Created, those monstrous constructs of once-dead flesh that are shaped by obsessed and evil souls. If one wishes to attack a fiend in close quarters, one must secure an enchanted weapon.

My colleagues and I took this as a given, and never attempted to attack a fiend with an unenchanted blade. There are also written accounts, such as the following, which confirm this theory.

. . . Jared thinks I froze, but I never did. I just got sense enough not to go charging into a fire after a monster that's a whole lot bigger and meaner than me! Anyway, I heard Samael dying and then I saw the thing come out after Jared. I hung back and stuck to cover, trying to get behind it. Maybe it didn't see me, or else I didn't worry it none.

Jared got the jump on it and hit it twice with his sickle, two good cuts, but the blade just bounced off of it like it had hit a rock! Sparks flew, and some of the red gook on the thing got onto the sickle and started to bubble. The monster moved right quick, and cut Jared with the pike. Then it reversed the butt and cracked him good, sent him flying into a tree. Then walked toward him, whistling all the way.

Then I took my chance! I cut him twice from behind with old Quickclaw, a gift from me grandpa, and still a fine old blade. The first one was deep. The monster screamed, and looked at me with its glowin' eyes. I thought sure I was dead, but then it vanished in a blink. I got Jared up, and we beat feet. Creeana was destroyed.

Never seen anything like it before, and hope I never see it again! Funny though, sometimes when I'm just sitting quiet I hear that whistling crawling along in the back of my head. [Investigator's Note: Testing of this man's sword reveals that it is enchanted.]

—Recorded by Ashlan of Il Aluk, as told by Clem Nimbletoe.

This entry confirms that while normal weapons have no effect on fiends, magical weapons may indeed harm them. However, not all magical weapons are the same! Magical weapons differ in the degree of enchanment, and as with certain undead or other magical creatures, some fiends may be vulnerable only to blades of particularly strong enchantment. It is likely that different fiends vary in this regard.

Yet ,there is another material more readily available for weapons which will harm, at least, some fiends. That substance is iron—cold, wrought iron.

The passage below was penned by a warrior unfortunate enough to encounter the Whistling Fiend. It illustrates the affect of iron on this beast, which shrugs off fine steel.

. . . As the horned creature leapt toward me, I raised my sword in feeble defense. The weight of the beast slammed me into the ground, but I realized that I was alive and the creature not moving! Struggling out from under the body of the beast, I saw that it had miscalculated its jump. It had landed on the iron fence, crushing a section and impaling itself on six of the posts!

I sought to examine the strange beast, but as I moved closer, it began to stir, struggling to free itself from the spikes. My sword had bounced off its hide too many times already, so I fled.

—Mithran Gray, Personal Journal.

Apparently, the cold iron of the fence pierced the fiend as it would any mortal creature. The fiend shares this vulnerability to iron with certain other supernatural creatures. Its susceptibility to iron also raises the possibility that certain fiends may be vulnerable to weapons of silver as well. There is no record of a fiend's encounter with this precious metal, but many magical creatures vulnerable to cold iron are also harmed by silver.

All ghereleths are immune to all unenchanted weapons. Yugoloths and baatezu are immune to normal weapons and iron, but are vulnerable to silver. Most tanar'ri take full damage from both iron and silver weapons.

Resistance to Spells

Many magical or undead creatures are resistant to at least certain types of magic. Some even have a resistance so powerful that it works to partially protect them from all magic. Fiends have a similar resistance.

Fiends shrug aside many spells as easily as they might an arrow or a dagger thrust. Yet, this resistance is not complete, nor is it based on the power of the magic being cast against the fiend. Many accounts of fiends describe their resistance to spells. My experience confirms it.

The two spellcasters in our party in the battle against Drigor used a myriad of spells, as well as powers from various magical devices. Many washed off it with no apparent affect, while others (particularly a spray of colored energy) injured it. Relatively minor magics sometimes affected Drigor, while more powerful attacks did not. The obvious lesson is that magic is an unreliable ally in a battle against a fiend.

Nonetheless, magic items and spells are still powerful tools which should be employed against a fiend when at all possible. It is logical to assume that with fiends, as with certain undead creatures, their resistance will vary. It is certainly best to use magical attacks, since they may damage the foe while keeping the wielder out of reach.

Fiends have magic resistance to varying degrees. This magic resistance functions normally in the RAVENLOFT setting, protecting the fiend against magical attacks but not from magical weapons. Magic resistance does not in any way assist the fiend against the Dark Powers.

Magic-Like Abilities

While the powers listed above are formidable enough to give pause to even the stoutest of heart, they are not even the most powerful weapons at the fiend's disposal. In addition to those abilities and immunities, fiends all possess the power to cast spells, or to at least create magical effects. Exactly where these abilities spring from is unclear.

The Source of the Power

My colleague, Dr. Ottelie Farringer, argued that fiends are true mages, either by nature or inclination. The following excerpt from her journals explains her position better than I ever could.

. . . While there is room for dispute on this matter, I believe that the fiends we have studied are mages, wielding powers which they have selected and learned according to their natural inclination and anticipated needs.

The vast intellect of the fiend supports this theory. It is clearly within their intellectual capability to become mages of the highest order. Further, while many undead or supernatural creatures can replicate certain spells at will, the evidence does not suggest that fiends fall into this category.

The vast number and diversity of the spells cast by fiends demonstrate that they must be chosen and studied to be cast when needed, as are the spells of any mortal mage. Note that of the other supernatural creatures, only the lich and demilich can match or exceed the fiend in magic ability, and they are trained spell-casters. Further, there are documented cases of a fiend reading spells from a scroll or making use of magical devices. These behaviors mirror those of the mage.

While the natural abilities of fiends are of legendary proportions, it simply boggles the imagination to suggest that the fiend possess by nature their diverse array of offensive, defensive, and protective spells.

—Dr. Ottelie Farringer, Clinical Notes.

With all due respect to my distinguished colleague and beloved friend, I disagree with her position. In my opinion, the available evidence strongly suggests that fiends wield powerful magics from their own natural abilities rather than through a rigorous course of study.

This is not to say that fiends are incapable of becoming mages. Fiends are highly intelligent, and they live for spans far exceeding the human life-cycle, if they are mortal at all. Therefore, a fiend could, in all likelihood, study the magical arts and further develop its talents. However, the documents available to us lead me to believe that fiends, in general, are creating magic-like effects with natural abilities.

First, the use of scrolls and magical devices in no way confirms that the user is trained as a mage. Many magical devices can be used by those who are not trained in the arts—and some cannot be used by those who are so trained. [Archmage Jacktin Terelleian, *Wizards, Magic and Magical Items: A Primer for the Serious Scholar*[4]]. Certain spells, particularly the protective magic to which Dr. Farringer made reference above, may also be read from scrolls by non-mages. While the behaviors Dr. Farringer noted are consistent with the behaviors of mages, they are consistent with non-mages as well[4].

Further, there is no evidence that fiends use, possess, or make the spellbooks that are the greatest treasure of the mage. No fiendish spellbook or fragment has ever been recovered for study, and the written accounts drafted by fiends themselves do not refer to spellbooks or to scribing spells.

The definitive proof that the spell-like abilities of the fiend are natural rather than learned is found in the fiend's arrival in the Land of the Mists. As discussed in the previous chapter, I have theorized that the most common methods by which fiends come among us are transposition and summoning. In one, the fiend arrives willingly in our lands, while in the other it may be drawn to this place at another's volition.

In both cases, the fiend seems to arrive bereft of possessions, save for one small object discussed in Chapter Four of this work. The fiend is figuratively "born" into this world, normally with nothing more than its bare skin and raw skill. The account of the arrival of the fiend Elsepeth in our realm supports this theory, as well as other recorded accounts of full or partial transposition.

Yet, fiends are able to cast spells immediately (as we saw in the account of the unfortunate Ms. Weaveron) upon their arrival, and somehow renew those abilities, despite the lack of both the raw materials needed to trigger the magical effects and spellbooks from which to relearn spells. These abilities must, therefore, be natural spell-like abilities.

Because of the extraordinary variety among fiends, it is very difficult to catalogue these abilities. Dr. Farringer was certainly correct that a fiend's powers are plentiful, diverse, and perhaps exceeded only by those of the lich and the demilich. Further, these fiendish abilities are very idiosyncratic, and cut across the specialties observed among mortal mages[4].

Therefore, the champions of good must expect a fiend to have extensive magical resources at its disposal. It is most important to study your foe. Learn everything that you can concerning its powers and behavior, and carefully chart the magics the fiend has used. This is the only way to determine the unique magical powers of the fiend and to prepare to counter them.

General Magical Powers

There are certain broad categories of magical abilities which all fiends possess to some degree. As established, all fiends have been noted to wield magic of some variety or other. Categories of powers are discussed in some detail following.

Charm

First, it has been noted that most, if not all, fiends have certain charm-like abilities that affect the minds and perceptions of its victims. One recent example is the fiend Elsepeth, who obviously used some power similar to the mage's *charm person* spell to calm the fears of Tasha Weaveron, and to preserve the secret of her arrival in Falkovnia.

Fiends have other abilities which affect the minds of their victims and are even more powerful and dangerous than any standard *charm* spell. *The Madrigorian offers* an example.

Though we foolish mortals may oppose the will of the Great Ones, and harden our hearts to

them, their mighty power and the light of their presence will bring us back to the fold. With a wave of the hand, a smile, and a few words of wisdom and grace, the Great Ones can smooth the furrowed brow, soothe the angry heart and dispel our confusion. No one may remain disturbed while in the presence of the Great Ones. Their wisdom enlightens the mind and soothes the heart. The mob becomes an assembly. We find true grace in the light of their presence, and receive wise counsel at the feet of the Masters.

—The Madrigorian, *Book VIII, Chapter XX.*

Drigor describes more here than just powerful charisma. The power described is akin to mass hypnosis, designed to capture many minds at once. Certain powerful spells and magical items can create or duplicate this effect, in which the wielder fosters good will among those around him. The text seems designed to prepare the readers to be willing targets, but I can personally attest to the fact that even the most unwilling targets are not immune to Drigor's mind-controlling, mood-altering powers.

During my disasterous confrontation with Drigor, the fiend somehow put my companions and I magically off-guard. I shall never forgive myself for not being strong enough to resist its foul charms, but I found myself convinced that Drigor was no more harmful than a wandering minstrel. Mists take me, I even felt remorseful over having sought the creature out with violence in mind.

This power, and mind-affecting magics in general, are particularly suited for the cunning nature of the fiend. Subtle charms are dangerous even to a determined foe, for they may divide the loyalties of those who oppose the fiend. Thus, it is wise to avoid contact with a fiend until the very moment of confrontation.

December Tenth,

Dr. Farringer and I continue to concentrate our research efforts in the hamlet of Edrigan itself.

Despite the reluctance among the folk to confide in us, the pretense that we are gathering research for a work of regional history continues to provide confirmation of certain of the events reported in The Madrigorian.

We also continue to uncover details about the Madrigore "authors." It is clear that for as long as the Madrigores have been the lords of Edrigan, there has always been one "author," one member who did little but feverishly script crazed ramblings.

This morning, Dr. Farringer spoke with the young man who was to marry Bethany Madrigore. Her father died a week or so before they were to be wed, and that very night, the young lady called the wedding off. When he went to dissuade her, he found her at the desk where her father had been feverishly writing ever since both he and his beloved had been children. Now, it was Bethany who was sitting there, a wild stare in her eye and ink stains on her hands. She was almost unrecognizable, he said, and she seemed to barely be aware of who he was.

Much to our surprise and cautious delight, near midday, a message arrived for us at the inn. The message proved to be a note from the Mistress of Edrigan, Bethany Madrigore. The lady invited Dr. Farringer and myself, by name, to dinner at the Madrigore estate on the following evening. Dr. Farringer's examination of the note confirmed that it was written in a hand which matched that of the author of The Madrigorian!

—Rudolph Van Richten,
Personal Journal

Almost all fiends have *charm* related abilities. All baatezu and yugoloths have the ability to cast *charm person*, while the shator ghereleths (like Drigor) have the ability to *beguile* (as the *rod of beguiling*, once per day) foes. Many tanar'ri have the *charm* ability as well.

Many types of fiends have other spell-like abilities related to charm or illusion. See the *Monstrous Manual*™ or *Planescape Monstrous Compendium* for full details.

Illusions

The fiend has other magical resources at its disposal to manipulate the hearts and minds of the mortals around them. Fiends all appear to be masters of various types of illusion magics. They use these powers to hide their true nature and forms from mortal eyes, and to manipulate the perceptions of their human pawns to further their dark goals.

For example, Clem and Jared, the militiamen who encountered the Whistling Fiend, described the fiend changing from a normal man to a huge, horned, skeletal figure before entering battle. There is also much evidence that the fiend who transposed itself with Ammie Weaveron often cloaks itself in illusory guises.

The Beast of Ehrendton, a tragic saga believed by many to be fiction, provides yet another account of a fiend who reveals its powers of illusion. The author's grandson, the current Lord Ironhand, states that his grandfather always swore that the story was true. In this account, written years after the fact, we see how the fiend lived among mortals in an illusory guise.

. . . This dark figure resided in a fortress deep in the Southern mountains, in a region known as Ehrendton. This location was remote, and often outside the reach of civil authority. Rumors reached us that this warrior, a powerful man who was the size of a bear, whose hair and bear wild as a briar patch and who wore only dark livery, had assembled a band of followers without land or honor who terrorized the surrounding countryside. They preyed on travelers and kept the local peasants in a state of slavery.

We vowed that we would ride to Ehrendton, find this Black Duke and end his reign of terror. After all, no mere bandit could stand against the combined swords of six noble warriors, wielded in the cause of justice! And so we rode forth from Castle Drakkir that sunny day, thinking we were bound for glory.

By the Gods, we were young! Who could have known what waited in Ehrendton?

—Sir Armand Ironhand,
The Beast of Ehrendton

Later sections describe the transformation of this "Black Duke" into a huge winged creature possessing magical powers, tremendous strength, and skill with weapons. The creature described in this work could only be a fiend, who decided to seize power in a remote region of Nova Vaasa while it using its powers of illusion or alteration to hide its true nature from the populace.

Many fiends possess illusion or alteration magics which they use to conceal their true nature.

All baatezu possess the power *advanced illusion*, while yugoloths use their *alter self* ability.

Most tanar'ri also possess some sort of spell-like power which enables them to make changes to their appearance. While a fiend might be able to utilize its illusions in whatever form that advances the DM's plot (and creativity is encouraged when devising stragies and powers for fiends), the *Planescape Monstrous Compendium* has complete details on the powers of illusion available to the fiends.

Defensive Magics

The magic of the fiend is not wholly focused upon the minds of its adversaries. It has among its resources a variety of powers intended to protect it from harm. These seem to vary from creature to creature, yet the most potent defense is apparently available to all of them.

Fiends all possess the ability to *teleport*, traveling great distances in less than the blink of an eye. This ability enables the creatures to strike with impunity and to escape when wounded or threatened. For example, the Whistling Fiend who disappeared after being stabbed twice by Clem Nimbletoe almost certainly *teleported* to safety when surprised by an adversary who could do it harm.

It is necessary to neutralize this *teleport* ability to force a final confrontation. Possible methods to temporarily curtail this ability, including one used with great effect against Drigor, are discussed in a later section of this work.

All baatezu, tanar'ri and yugoloths possess the ability to *teleport without error*. The fiend cannot *teleport* out of Ravenloft. However, unlike most beings, a fiend *may* use this ability to cross into or out of domains, even if the Darklord in question has closed its borders. It is impossible for a Darklord to close his or her domain borders to a fiend.

Ironically, the ghereleths, including Dr. Van Richten's shator nemesis Drigor, are the only fiends who do not have the ability to *teleport without error*. When battling that fiend, Dr. Van Richten assumed that it was able to use this avenue of escape.

Offensive Magics

The magical arsenal of the fiend also includes powerful offensive magics. Given their variety, it is difficult to group them into particular categories. It is possible, however, to draw certain general conclusions which may prove instructive.

A survey of the written accounts of battles with fiends reveal a great variety of offensive magics. An illuminating excerpt follows.

The Black Duke met us alone in his Great Hall. At first, we thought that he did so to avoid witnesses to his humiliation, or that his lackeys were setting up some clever ambush outside. We were foolish to be concerned with that rabble. They were the least of our worries!

I strode forth boldly and denounced him as an evil man, a blackguard, a coward, and a fool. I called him forward to meet me in single combat, to answer with his life for the crimes he had perpetrated upon the people of Nova Vaasa. He stopped me with a wash of fire that erupted from his hand. The flames fanned out around me, burning my clothing, hands, and face.

My companions spread out slowly as I retreated in shock. We had not known that this man was a mage! How could he be? He wore armor and swords, and obviously lead others into battle. It was then, as we struggled to adapt to this new information, that the creature struck.

Everything seemed to happen at once. All at once, the Black Duke grew to an enormous size, splitting the armor he wore and seeming to fill the room. Huge wings and a long tail sprouted from his body, which was covered in dull red scales. The body of the beast was spiked with barbs that matched the barbs on the huge whip it now wielded. As it moved toward me, I shrank back in fear.

I am as ashamed now as I was then by this reaction, but I know that I could no more have kept myself from running than I could have stopped breathing. I fled toward a side corridor, with Jess d'Lurien beside me. At a harsh word from the beast, a wall of flame sprang up which shrouded the hall and blocked the corridor. We both ran through it, our desperate need to run stronger than our pain. As we fled down the hallway, we heard the deafening sound of

thunder from the Great Hall, and the laughter of the beast within!

—Sir Armand Ironhand,
The Beast of Ehrendton.

This passage describes several offensive magic abilities available to the fiend. Although the Beast of Ehrendton seems to have a preference for fire-based spells, this is not so with all fiends. Once again, each of these creatures is a unique individual and each and every one has a preferred method of fighting. The physical power of a fiend is often matched by its magical abilities, and these powers are used with stunning speed and deadly effect. Any given fiend will likely possess a number of the offensive spells available to a mage.

Fiends have a great variety of spell-like abilities. While for the most part they replicate wizard spells, some are in fact duplicates of priest spells as well. Refer to the *Planescape Monstrous Compendium* for the the spell-like abilities available to each fiend.

Like the spells they resemble, fiendish powers are altered by the Land of the Mists.

The section lists fiendish powers that work differently in the Ravenloft setting than they do on other planes. Note that some of the spells would normally call for a Dark Powers check. Fiends do not make these checks, for fiends are already evil beyond the capacity of those powers to transform. The relationship of the fiend to the Dark Powers is far more complicated than most.

Altered Powers

Animate Dead: The effects of this ability are enhanced in Ravenloft. Here the fiend can animate and control twice the usual number of corpses.

Cause Disease: This power functions normally for the fiend, no Dark powers check is required.

Clairaudience: The sensor for this spell in Ravenloft is a visible ghostly ear. Further, the spell is limited in effect to one mist-bound realm.

Conjure Elemental: Fiends may only summon Ravenloft elementals (as described in the first *Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium Appendix*) with this ability. These monstrosities are always free-willed, so fiends do not use this power unless severely pressed.

Curse: This spell-like power works as described under "Curses" in the Ravenloft *Revised Campaign Set.*.

Detect Good: No one can magically detect evil or good in the Ravenloft setting. This spell-like ability and its reverse do not work.

Energy Drain: This ability functions normally in Ravenloft. The fiend need not make a Dark Powers check.

ESP: This spell functions in the Land of the Mists. However, unlike on other planes, this spell can pick up projected thoughts of undead creatures. These creatures will often intentionally project kind thoughts to mask their true nature. Fiends often intentionally "listen in" on nearby undead for amusement, enjoying the irony of the false thoughts as well as the hideous evil of their true natures.

Gate: This ability does not function normally for any fiend in Ravenloft. The Land itself and its Dark Powers will certainly not allow any fiend to depart the Land of the Mists via this method. All Greater fiends have a 5% chance to succeed in an attempt to gate in an ally. Lesser fiends have a 2% chance to succeed. Those wretched creatures known as Least fiends have no chance to overcome the power of the Mists.

Know Alignment: Ravenloft insulates evil from discovery. The target of this ability receives a saving throw. Even if they fail that save, the fiend can only detect the lawful, neutral or evil component of alignment.

Plane Shift: This power merely transports the fiend to a different domain within Ravenloft. It cannot help a fiend depart from

the demiplane.

Raise Dead: This ability functions normally, except that if the fiend's target fails its resurrection survival roll, he becomes an undead creature of a type equal in hit dice to its former level.

Teleport Without Error: This spell cannot transport the fiend outside of Ravenloft.

Vampiric Touch: The effects of this ability are enhanced in Ravenloft, with the victim losing one permanent hit point of damage per every die of damage inflicted. The fiend need not make a Dark Powers check.

Word of Recall: This power works normally, except that it cannot transport the fiend between planes.

Ethos-Based Powers

While all fiends are utterly evil, and engage in reprehensible acts designed only to enhance their own schemes, some behave very differently from others. There is some evidence to suggest that their behavior and powers may be connected in some way. Fiends who share ethos also seem to share certain abilities.

Careful review of the written records of fiends with a focus on their attitudes and behavior seems to show that there are two broad groupings into which we can divide these unique creatures. These groups are mostly artificial, and are used not to limit the fiend, but strictly for the purpose of simplifying our discussion. [*See* Dr. Jacov Bluemenstin, *Philosophical Discourses Among Supernatural Beings: Higher Truths or Tribalism?* [1]].

One group of fiends seem to behave with a certain regard for principles such as order, loyalty and logic. These tend to adhere rigidly to the twisted philosophical frameworks in which they operate; and they are well-organized and methodical in pursuit of both their immediate and their long term goals.

Any term developed to discuss human nature is undoubtedly inadequate when dealing with the complex, alien psyche of the fiend. Indeed, our language and understanding may be wholly inadequate to truly grasp the fiendish nature. However, like any researcher and writer, I am bound by the limits of my language and frame of reference. Therefore, I will refer to these fiends as "lawful"[1].

The other "group" of fiends approaches matters differently. First, they are by all appearances utterly devoid of concern for, or loyalty to, any cause or being other than themselves. Secondly, while they are extremely intelligent and dangerous adversaries, they tend to behave in a less-organized and logical fashion than their "lawful" counterparts.

This seeming limitation may in fact be a disadvantage for those who battle these fiends, because it makes their actions even less predictable than the norm. Yet this lack of organization also sometimes limits the ability and willingness of these fiends to plan far in advance or to prepare for every eventuality. In addition, their lack of personal loyalty breeds nothing but distrust and betrayal around them. This atmosphere of intrigue and danger may make them more vulnerable to betrayal by their servitors, for leaders who feel no trust or loyalty inspire none in those who serve them. Keeping in mind the caution we must use when discussing the fiendish mentality, these fiends may be described as "chaotic"[1].

The Source of the Power

Now that our categories are defined, we can consider the question of whether it is the power that brings the behavior or the behavior that brings the power?

The raising of this issue may seem pointless to some readers—after all, the fiends *have* the power and that is all we really need to know—but the possible implications of the answer are rather important.

One possibility is that the answers to the above-mentioned questions are the same for

fiends as it is for mortals. That is, differences in abilities and temperament are shaped by environment as well as its innate nature.

These differences may suggest that not only do fiends develop or mature in differing environments (or on differing worlds), but that there may be different groups or factions of fiends. The possible existence of factionalism among fiends should come as no surprise, for they are powerful and intelligent beings with sharp differences in personality and outlook. They may have internal divisions every bit as great as those in human society.

The idea of a social structure among fiends leads to the second possible source of a fiend's ethos-based power, and this thought chills my very soul.

Most readers have probably encountered priests in the service of differing gods, each of whom adhere to their deity's preferred ethos. While there is a similarity in priestly powers of healing and warding of evil, each deity also grants his or her servants unique abilities.

It is a terrifying concept, but perhaps fiends, too, are clerics. Perhaps they draw upon the might of some gods in the reality that they call home. This theory horrifies me, because *if* the fiends are being granted powers akin to mortal priests by other-dimensional obscenities, then what goals of their masters are they serving in our reality?

The practical value of both theories, however, are limited. First, fiends are so rare that we have no recorded instance of two fiends interacting. Therefore, we have no sample from which to judge their capacity or willingness for cooperation or other social activity. Second, if fiends *do* gain their ethos-based abilities from grossly evil and powerful gods, then the meeting of two priests as haughty as fiends would most assuredly result in a Holy War . . . and such a conflict would devastate our lands.

Dr. Van Richten is correct in believing that there are alignment differences among fiends. However, his categorizations are rudimentary. For example, while Yugoloths are Neutral Evil, Dr. Van Richten has evidence of their total disregard for loyalty of any sort, and assumes they are chaotic. The alignments given for fiends in the *Monstrous Manual* are still correct. He is correct in assuming that fiends of all sorts exist within the frameworks of rigid hierarchies, at least on their home planes. The *PLANESCAPE Monstrous Compendium* provides all the details, but suffice to say that if a tanar'ri and a baatezu were to encounter one another, a battle that would devastate vast areas would ensue; the chaotic and lawful fiends have been battling each other since the beginning of time.

Powers of Lawful Fiends

The following powers and tendencies have been particularly noted among those fiends whom we tentatively classify as "lawful." These abilities tend to be oriented toward improving the defensive and manipulative abilities of the creature, rather than its combat power. While they are less powerful in combat, they rely on their greater strengths, counting on this power to preserve them.

Regeneration

This fearsome ability adds to the power and resilience of some fiends. It has been observed that certain fiends have the capacity to heal at an extremely rapid rate. Their tissue knits and repairs the effects of wounds before the very eyes of their foes. A lawful fiend may sometimes heal in minutes from a wound that would impair a mortal for days.

Not all lawful fiends regenerate damage; of baatezu most commonly found in the RAVENLOFT setting, only gelugons and pit fiends can regenerate injuries rapidly.

Telepathy

This fearsome power allows the fiend to communicate with any human by insinuating itself into the mortal mind, and perhaps even the mortal soul. [Glental Grimfoot, *Silent Speech: Mental Communication Among Supernatural Beings*[5]]. The horror of this power must be obvious to any who contemplate the touch of that alien, evil mind upon their own.

Certain written accounts provide examples of this power. Consider the account of Sir Ironhand, in which the fiend whom he and his comrades battled in Ehrendton spoke directly to his mind. In addition, there are passages in Ashlan of Il Aluk reports regarding the Whistling Fiend which bear study. Recall that Clem Nimbletoe mentioned he often thought he heard the habitual whistling of the fiend.

It is possible that he was merely expressing his minds' continuing attempt to remain whole in the wake of his gruesome encounter. However, it is very likely that the fiend remained in the area for a time.

Given the nature of the Whistling Fiend, it probably lurked patiently, seeking a chance to revenge itself by quietly destroying the mortal who had driven it away. In the meantime, the fiend sent its thoughts to monitor the man, and its signature whistling to serve as a constant reminder to keep its prey on edge and awaiting disaster. This theory cannot be confirmed, for no records of the death of this Clem Nimbletoe can be found. However, it is also certain that the Whistling Fiend lives on, for it is seen again over a century later on the other side of Darkon.

It has been my experience that "chaotic" fiends either do not have this power or choose not to use it. They communicate verbally, often speaking in the language of those to whom they address. In all of our extensive research, our "expert" study, and tracking, and our confrontation with Drigor (a black-hearted, vicious creature if ever there was one), not once did we discover any record or encounter in which the fiend spoke telepathically.

While this is not a definite guarantee that it did not have this power, I believe that Drigor would use telepathy if it had the ability. The comparative ease of telepathy, as well as the added effect of the voice of the fiend resounding within a mortal's mind, is convincing evidence that fiends who have telepathy will use it.

> Dr. Van Richten has correctly identified telepathic communication as a power of the fiend, but is mistaken in saying that it is a power of only lawful fiends. All baatezu, tanar'ri and yugoloths have the power of telepathy. Dr. Van Richten was mislead by the fact that Drigor, his model for all chaotic fiends, is a shator. The gehreleth are, in fact, the only fiends who do not have telepathy.

Guile and Manipulation

Recorded encounters and information show that lawful fiends exhibit more tendencies toward guile and manipulation, whereas, their chaotic counterparts tend toward more direct habits

To a certain extent, this is no doubt caused by the different ethos orientations of the fiends. The tendencies of the lawful fiend to organize, plan and create complex schemes and support structures allow for more long-term planning and for delicate manipulation behind the scenes'. To a certain extent, this orientation is simply a matter of predilection and discipline.

While it is difficult to determine cause and effect, the lawful fiends have shown a tendency toward the use of illusion and charm as opposed to pure physical or magical confrontation. They use these powers, and therefore are forced to act in a more cautious, rational and organized (i.e., lawful) manner because these resources require more time, energy, and planning to reach fruiion. While the

answer to this riddle is yet uncertain, these habits may make the lawful fiend slightly more dangerous in the long term, and less vulnerable to manipulation and frustration.

Dr. Van Richten is correct that the natural, spell-like abilities of lawful fiends focuses more on charm and manipulation than those of their chaotic brethren. All baatezu have among their base powers *advanced illusion*, *charm person*, *know alignment* and *suggestion*. Certain lawful fiends supplement these with their own additional abilities; for example, the erinyes, gelugons and pit fiends can *polymorph self*. In addition, lawful fiends find they have the power to cast four levels(of 1st- and 2nd-level spells) of the charm or illusion schoiiss per day in addition to their normal spell-like abilities. This is a gift from the Dark Powers, in order to enhance their natural inclinations.

The neutral Yugoloths have *alter self*, *charm person*, and *improved phantasmal force* as part of their basic set of abilities. However, most of the the chaotic tanar'ri and their brethren, the gehreleth, have no powers of illusion or charm. Some powerful tanar'ri, however, possess some powers of illusion, with the succubus being foremost among them, while the shator ghereleths do have the ability to *beguile* opponents. See the *Planescape Monstrous Compendium* for more information.

Powers of Chaotic Fiends

There are also certain powers seemingly peculiar to chaotic fiends. Their situation is in many ways a mirror-image of that of their lawful brethren. The powers associated with chaotic fiends are primarily physical in nature. These special abilities are more suited for direct combat than for subtle manipulation.

Physical Immunities

It seems that these chaotic fiends, more inclined to engage in combat pell-mell, are slightly better adapted for that task by nature than their more lawful brethren. This is yet another example of the physical and intellectual aspects of evolution working together to produce a balanced and focused creation. One trait of chaotic fiends which is more developed than that of lawful fiends, is their immunity to various forms of natural and magical attacks.

While we have discussed the resistance of all fiends to fire and cold, it seems chaotic fiends are also immune to electricity and acid.

In addition to having surveyed several written accounts, I have personally witnessed the invulnerability of the chaotic fiend to attacks of acid and electricity. Beakers of acid and bolts of lightning washed over Drigor with as little effect as the fire potion I mentioned in an earlier passage. My frustration and horror only grew as the battle continued and, tragically, so little that we did seemed to affect our foe. Drigor never had any reason to fear us.

However, one of the most chaotic fiends what walks our land, the creature known as the Whistling Fiend is *not* immune to acid. During a violent foray into Falkovnia's Lekar, the Whistling Fiend was severely injured when it accidentily splashed acid on itself. This serves to further underscore the variety in fiends.

The chaotic tanar'ri are immune to the effects of electrical attacks, while other fiends are not. Drigor's magic resistance preserved him from the lightning bolt.

Ghereleths and yugoloths are immune to acid, while tanar'ri and baatezu suffer full damage. Further, certain powerful fiends have additional resistances. The shator, for example, are immune to all non-magical attack forms.

Enhanced Magical Powers

As indicated in the general section on spell-like powers, above, the magical powers of the fiend are dazzling in their diversity. However, accounts indicate that the chaotic fiend enjoys an advantage in magical power similar to that which they hold in physical immunities. While the varied nature of these powers, and the difficulties in identifying them precludes precision, the chaotic fiends clearly have greater magical powers at their disposal.

The available evidence suggests that they have a far wider variety of offensive and defensive spell-like abilities to choose from. Spells of mass-destruction like *lightning bolt* and *fireball* are particularly lethal when the fiend starts his attack with some mood-altering power that puts his foes off guard. Although "less organized" than the lawful fiend, the chaotic fiend is still a cunning and deadly adversary.

The *Monstrous Manual* contains an adequate treatment of the powers of fiends under the baatezu and tanar'ri entries, but a full listing of the spell-like abilities of all fiends can be found in the *PLANESCAPE Monstrous Compendium*. Generally, the chaotic fiends have a far broader and more diverse selection of these powers to choose from. While some baatezu are very powerful, tanar'ri and yugoloths on the whole are magically far stronger. Ghereleths, by comparison, have relatively few spell-like abilities to choose from.

All chaotic fiends in the RAVENLOFT setting may cast four levels of 1st- and 2nd-level Evocation spells per day, in addition to their normal spell-like abilities. The powers of the land boost their power in the same manner that they aid the lawful fiends.

III: Fiends and the Land

The Great Ones have power over the land as well. The rocks and earth move in response to their will. The trees and grass see their needs and seek to please them. When a Great One deigns to visit this land, he makes it his own. He may pass through the lands at will, none may stop him, and none may stand against him in its confines. The Great Ones force their will upon the land—it serves them as well.

—The Madrigorian, Book IV, Chapter II.

Many theories of the origin of fiends postulate some magic or psychic connection between the Land and the fiends. Such a link is certainly plausible given the tremendous power of fiends, and the manner in which beings of great power and/or evil seem so often to flourish in the shadow of the Mists. Evidence also shows that fiends, under certain circumstances, may draw power from the land itself. In this chapter, we examine the effects fiends have upon the physical reality of our world, and what effects the physical reality has on the fiends.

Reality Wrinkles

Fiends warp the very lands that surround them from the moment they arrive in the Land of the Mists. This may well be the fiends' most horrible and awesome power. With evil power and force of will, the fiend dominates the land around it in these regions that I term "reality wrinkles."

These reality wrinkles center on the fiend, as nature's whirlwinds ever center on pockets of deadly calm. They travel with the fiend, and seem to set it apart from our world, as if the monstrosity holds to its alien nature even while it walks our land. The fiend's reality wrinkle separates it from the Land of the Mists and gives it special powers and freedoms.

Several sources confirm the existence of these "wrinkles." First, Dr. Farringer and I directly observed one when we first approached Drigor. Written accounts also record their existence, including the overblown excerpt from *The Madrigorian* above.

Causes of Reality Wrinkles

Despite the best efforts of myself and other scholars, the cause of reality wrinkles remains shrouded in uncertainty. These areas certainly may stem from the reaction between the alien presence of the fiend and our land. Yet it is equally possible that the fiend itself creates its pocket domain by some direct act of will. The following three theories are the most widely-accepted hypotheses concerning the cause of these bizarre twists in the very fabric of our reality.

The Power of Evil

Perhaps the most widely-held theory concerning reality wrinkles is that they are formed when the fiend first enters the land. According to this theory, the magical and psychic energies of the fiend are so powerful that they ever strive to impose themselves upon the mystic/psychic template of our land. In the same way that the force of one powerful magnet repels another, the intensely evil presence of the fiend reacts against the land. Although every creature, from the smallest babe to the most powerful wizard, seeks to impose its will upon reality, few succeed. However, the fiend is so powerful that it does succeed in its quest, twisting and shifting the land around it. This is not to say that this "quest" is necessarily any more conscious than our bodies' "quest" to displace water when we dive into a pool. The fiend's psychic presence may merely be so powerful that it displaces our world's

psyche as easily as our bodies displace bath water.

This theory seems equally valid whether the fiend arrives in the Land of the Mists from some unknown place, or simply springs into existence.

Residual Energies

Another theory holds that reality wrinkles result from the magical energies of the fiend, not its evil nature. According to this theory, fiends arrive in the Land of the Mists from some other world, a magical realm, and their innate magical nature shapes the land around them to provide the fiend with a livable environment.

The residual energies from the fiend's passage to our world create an aura or field around the creature in the same manner as a strong electrical current can create a field of electricity. The energy field clinging to the fiend then reacts to the energies of our land, causing perceptible "wrinkles" in our reality.

Magical Abilities

The final theory I shall address postulates that fiends consciously create reality wrinkles by employing some magical spell or power. The fiend's powerful magic, no matter what its origin, allows the fiend to impose its will on the land around it. No spells or magical powers currently known could explain this ability. Yet the power of the fiend is great, and it would be foolhardy to entirely ignore this possibility.

The first theory set forth above is correct. The fiend's evil nature reacts with the Land and creates what is essentially a pocket domain in which the fiend is the Darklord.

Size of Reality Wrinkles

As each fiend is unique, so too is its reality wrinkle. Reality wrinkles vary greatly in their dimensions from fiend to fiend. The

December Eleventh.

This evening was most disturbing, and yet most revealing. Approaching the grounds of the Madrigore estate, I began to feel a "wrongness" about my surroundings. I almost dismissed this as the imaginings of an old man, yet Dr. Farringer made a comment indicating she was similarly affected. What we felt is difficult to put into words. We perceived the world around us through a slight haze or shimmer, as if we were in the midst of a desert heat mirage. Further, distances seemed slightly distorted and as though they changed from moment to moment. This effect was so faint it may have been psychic or psychological rather than physical, but it was very real.

The dinner itself was quite proper. Our young hostess questioned us in great detail concerning our forthcoming "history" and our reasons for selecting Edrigan. Surprisingly, she made comments indicating that she was familiar with my previous body of work and my career. Indeed, she discoursed comfortably on creatures such as the vampire and werewolf.

Despite the sumptuous food and the pleasant conversation, my sense of unease grew throughout the evening. Careful observation of Bethany Madrigore revealed signs that she may not have been in control of her faculties. She touched not a drop of her wine, yet she had slightly flushed cheeks, and her eyes were a bit unfocused. She would stare out into the room, at no one, even while carrying on an animated conversation. Her speech and movements were hesitant, as if her mind and body were not completely at one . . .

—Dr. Rudolf Van Richten, Personal Journal.

size of the wrinkles apparently ranges from the few yards around the Whistling Fiend to the roughly three square miles of Drigor's wrinkle.

Although reality wrinkles are normally a constant presence around the fiend and stable in their size, a fiend's reality wrinkle can sometimes change. While this might indicate that the distortions are indeed generated by residual energies that diminish as time progresses, the little evidence we have access to indicates that a change in the wrinkle is tied to changes in the fiend's powers or relationship with the land. Such changes seem to occur only when a fiend actively seeks to anchor itself more firmly in our reality through magical rituals discussed below.

The power of a fiend determines the size of its reality wrinkle. The range of each fiend's domain varies from a few feet to approximately three square miles. This effect has no impact on a character's combat ability, but the distortion effect is unsettling, and the larger areas cause a –2 penalty to any morale checks.

The DM should set an appropriate range for the reality wrinkle of any fiend in his campaign within these limits. In general, powerful fiends such as pit fiends will create larger wrinkles, while lesser fiends will produce much smaller distortions.

Control of Reality Wrinkles

Both my own experiences and the written account set forth below, indicate that fiends have some control over their reality wrinkle, and are able to mold and shape the very land and buildings around them in whatever fashion they desire. If this power is real, it is possessed by no other inhabitant of the Land of the Mists that I know of. The following passage from *The Beast of Ehrendton* illustrates this ability. This section of the story occurs just before the climactic battle which reveals the identity of the fiend:

I spoke then, declaiming his foul misdeeds, the way he and his lackeys brutalized the populace, robbed traveling merchants, destroyed the surrounding towns and farms, and left the people destitute and begging by the roadsides.

When I finished, the Black Duke demanded to know who I was to speak to him thus, and if I planned to act on my bold words. I proudly pronounced my family name, and told him that my compatriots and I were here to challenge him in the name of justice. He smiled sardonically, and beckoned us forward as he leaned back in his huge chair.

As I walked across the length of the grand hall, I noted something very strange. It seemed as if my perceptions were faulty, or fading in and out with wine, though I had not consumed a drop of alcohol. As I walked toward him, the Black Duke got farther away. He actually dwindled in the distance, and I stopped, confused. Suddenly, the Black Duke shot closer, returning to his original position in the hall! I looked to my comrades, and saw from the confusion on their faces that they too had seen this incredible event. Then our host laughed again, and suddenly seemed to shoot forward until he was within ten feet of us. He faded back and forth for quite some time, apparently enjoying toying with us. When he finally ceased his movement, the Duke stood again where we first encountered him.

"Come," he said, "I tire of your presence here. Issue your challenge, so that I may be rid of it—and of you!

—Sir Armand Ironhand,
The Beast of Ehrendton.

This account is the only record of a fiend manipulating the size, shape and proportions of the land under the feet of its foes. Some combination of powerful magical abilities may well account for the effect described. Yet, given the extraordinary powers of all fiends, it would be a serious error to assume anything less than the worst. When you confront a fiend, reality itself may work against you!

The land inside a fiend's reality wrinkle does not change with the fiend's arrival. It merely passes from the dominion of the domain lord to the fiend. This immediately alerts the lord to the presence of some powerful force in his or her realm. Fiends cannot seal the borders of their "pocket domains." Any being who wishes to enter the reality wrinkle and approach the fiend is free to do so.

Freedom of Movement

Fiends travel freely throughout the Land of the Mists. While this ability is not surprising, given the tremendous power of the fiend, it almost assuredly stems directly from the reality wrinkle. The energy of the reality wrinkle insulates the fiend, protecting it from the effects of the Mists and other strange magical conditions that occasionally are observed along the political borders of the realms.

An example of such freedom of movement is found in *The Madrigorian*. In an autobiographical passage, the fiend Drigor describes its efforts to research and construct a strange device, a ship which was in part mechanical and in part magical. This device would allow him to pierce the barrier around some place called the "Astral Plane," and thereby escape from our reality.

This project involves an astounding effort of mundane and magical design, engineering and construction. Never have I heard of any effort remotely like this one. This odd project stands as a testament to the scope of Drigor's imagination and creativity, but its continued presence is testimony to the unfortunate failure of its efforts. How much grief would have been spared our world if only it had succeeded?

This magical device is important to this tome only because Drigor records its efforts in great detail, and thus records his ability to travel throughout the realms, even to areas surrounded totally by the supernatural Mists. Yet, it makes only passing reference to the Vistani. They did not guide Drigor's party through the Mists, normally an essential service for those who attempt such journeys.

The fiend tells this story very simply, with no apparent effort to dissemble. Drigor did not appear to realize that this type of travel is in any way out of the ordinary.

Another valuable source for information on the ease with which fiends travel in our land is a chronicle sent to me by an adventuring mage named Zartin the Red. The text sheds light on many fiendish topics while telling the tale of a fiend with the head of a jackal and Strahd von Zarovich, the ruler of Barovia.

Fiends are able to walk freely the borders of the domains in Ravenloft, even those which have been closed by their Lords. The borders of the fiends' pocket domains are continually open. When the open border of such a pocket domain meets the closed border of one of the normal domains, the power of the pocket domain supersedes the more diffuse power of the realm. Thus, no Darklord can bar a fiend's passage through his or realm.

Opacity

Reality wrinkles also seem to protect the fiend from prying eyes, rendering the creature and the area within its pocket domain immune to scrying or other magical observation.

The following account of the jackal-headed fiend known as Inajira, comes from Zartin the Red, a powerful mage from my homeland, who is a veteran warrior against the Dark in all its guises. His latest adventure involved a remarkable series of encounters with the vampire Strahd and a fiend known as Inajira (who apparently has an enmity with Strahd that began some time ago). From Zartin's account, it is clear that the reality wrinkle creates an area that is secured against magical observation.

. . . And the creature laughed, his muzzle upturned in a sneer as he vanished.

"My lord," I murmured nervously, "the creature must be watched. He cannot be trusted to remain apart from us in this quest." My companions muttered agreement. While we were no friends of Strahd, none of us trusted that creature

Strahd whirled toward me, restraining himself with an obvious effort of will, and replied in sharp, clipped terms. "We can't! You should know that as well as I. We cannot see his kind magically, and with his ability to teleport, it could be anywhere."

—Zartin the Red,
Autobiography of a Wandering Mage.

Personal experience confirms this abbreviated statement by Strahd. While my companions searched for Drigor in preparation for the coming battle, our mage, Annalyn, made repeated efforts to locate the fiend by magical means, to spy upon its habits and environs. Yet each effort to make magical contact with the fiend proved unsuccessful. This inability adds to the evidence that fiends are undetectable by magical means.

Dr. Van Richten is partially correct in his observations. The reality wrinkle of the fiend does create an area that is impenetrable to the scrutiny of a Darklord. The evil of the fiend disrupts the connection between the Darklord and his or her realm, and it is this connection that grants the Lord his ability to magically survey his domain.

Dr. Van Richten is incorrect, however, in surmising that fiends are immune to *all* scrying. Drigor is only immune to scrying because he possesses an *amulet of proof against detection and location.*

A Strangling Embrace

Fiends in the Land of the Mists are frustrated and furious creatures. Despite their horrible powers and control over the land, the arrogant creatures find themselves forever pursuing an apparently unattainable goal: escape.

Many accounts show that although most fiends desperately desire to return from whence they came, they apparently cannot do so.

The arrogant fiend struggles to impose its will in this matter as in all else, and its failure infuriates the monstrosity, filling it with agonies of need. Reality wrinkles demonstrate the fiend's power over the land. Yet, every gift carries a price.

Fiends are trapped in the Land of the Mists. It is possible that the evil which flourishes in the shadows and crevices of our realm is attracted to the fiend, as like attracts like so often in nature. This compelling evil may hold the fiend here in the land just as strongly as other aspects of the land reject the fiend's presence. Thus, although the fiend always exists on a level somewhat divorced from mundane reality, so too is it unable to move away from our land. The fiend is trapped, suspended between two poles of existence — unable to fully assimilate, yet also unable to escape.

If this theory is correct, it is the height of irony that those fiends who so often tempt and trap mere mortals are themselves trapped in return! The frustration, rage, and horror of the fiend resonate in the words of the fiend Inajira, as recorded by Zartin the Red.

Our cause appeared truly desperate as we sought to flee. The vampire lord fell upon my comrades, thanking us for providing him with such capable assistance in retrieving the arcane artifact.

"I like you, Zartin; perhaps I will let you stand by my side through the ages," Strahd said, swiftly slashing the life from Larkin the Strong. "You can have death or eternal life as my trusted servant . . . but you will not leave

this ruin with the knowledge you have gained unless you are a changed man."

All appeared lost until, suddenly, the jackal-headed creature appeared in the air between us. "I hope I'm not interrupting anything," it said, unleashing a bolt of magical energy. The seething ray struck the vampire squarely on the chest, sending him reeling backwards. The artifact was wrenched from his grasp and darted to the creature's outstretched, clawed hand. He looked at it quizzically, as he unleashed another blast of magical energy at the vampire with an almost casual gesture. "So, this was to be your escape, eh? I think not."

The creature muttered a quick incantation, and the artifact that we had quested so long and hard for turned to dust before my eyes. Strahd howled in fury. The creature bellowed back: "You know the price, vampire! For as long as I am trapped in this odious shadow-world, you'll be denied happiness and release! We shall suffer together!"

With that, the creature and Strahd lunged at each other. The resulting din and clash of magics sounded as if a thousand battles in a thousand desperate wars raged all around us at once. Over it all, I heard the creature's harsh voice, "Flee mortal fool, or join your companions in death!"

—Zartin the Red,
Autobiography of a Wandering Mage.

This passage indicates that the fiend Inajira is a bitter exile in our land, desperate to return "home." A careful reading of *The Madrigorian* leads to the same conclusion regarding Drigor. The seemingly mad researches Drigor has sponsored over the course of its time in our world reveal the truth. From its scheme to build a magical vessel to a number of other magical research efforts over the years, the primary goal of Drigor has been, and still is, to escape the Land of the Mists. This impotence is perhaps the only thing that strikes horror in the cold hearts of fiends.

Gaining Powers

Horrifying as the prospect may be, fiends are able to gain new powers from the land to supplement their already considerable abilities. It seems that at specific times and places, when magical forces are aligned properly, fiends may draw upon the power inherent in the realms to enhance their own abilities and obtain new and terrible powers.

While, as a man I am dismayed at this possibility, as a scholar of the supernatural I welcome it. This final ability of the fiend knits together into this comprehensive theory of fiends in our land:

Fiends are apparently able to tap into the Land and draw upon its power, yet by so doing they pay a terrible price. When they draw power from one of the realms, they tie themselves ever more closely to our world, gradually smoothing the reality wrinkle that occurs around them, causing it to "shrink." Eventually, the fiend becomes as much a part of our world as you or I, through a process to which I have eye-witness testimony from an unexpected, though unimpeachable, source.

The Source of the Information

In the midst of my initial investigations of the fiend, I received a package. Both the source of the package and its arrival at all surprised me greatly, for I had made every effort to keep my researches completely secret. Nonetheless, an ally presented himself from most unusual quarters.

In the afternoon of a very dreary day, a messenger arrived at my home in a well-appointed coach-and-four. That individual courteously delivered a slender package and departed, leaving me to blanch in wonder, and no small amount of fear, at the seal on the envelope. The contents of the package were covered by a letter from my sovereign, Azalin, King of Darkon!

To Our Most Learned and Loyal Subject,
Dr. Rudolph Van Richten,

Greetings! We write to you today on a matter of mutual interest concerning the safety and preservation of the good people of Darkon, and those throughout the Land of the Mists. Your valiant efforts to study and battle the forces of Darkness in our realm have not gone unnoticed. Indeed, we share a professional interest with you in the supernatural, and certain of your prior works have been most entertaining and informative.

It has come to our attention that you are currently engaged in researching the existence and nature of creatures which you term "fiends." The enclosed excerpts from the work of a distinguished scholar and expert on all matters supernatural have recently come into our possession, and it is our fervent hope that the information contained herein will prove helpful to you.

We anxiously await the results of your research.

Yours in Service to Darkon,
Azalin Rex

I was shocked and amazed at this letter, for I have no relations with the wizard-king who rules my homeland. Yet it is not surprising that any ruler would wish to contribute to an effort to rid the land of fiends, particularly King Azalin, who must be concerned over the possibility of the Whistling Fiend resuming its havoc in Darkon. Upon further examining the packet I was again shocked, this time by the contents and author of the work. The package which His Highness had delivered contained original journal entries recording personal observations of a fiendish ritual. This ritual drew power to the fiend directly from the land. The entries were penned by none other than Count Strahd von Zarovich.

Acquiring New Powers

It is clear from Strahd's journal that the creature he encountered was none other than the Whistling Fiend. Though an unwilling witness to the creature enacting a dark ritual, Strahd made very perceptive and informative observations on the process and its results. This account seems to illustrate the means by which fiends draw energy and powers from the land itself. The text also sheds light on how one fiend uses such stolen energy to further enhance its own, already extraordinary, powers.

January 16th:

Yesterday, shortly after sunset, I felt a small area of blackness enter my awareness. This is imprecise phraseology, yet it accurately reflects the sensation of losing contact with a small piece of my land. Never in all my years of watching over the people of Barovia had I felt such a sensation. Therefore, while I moved to investigate, I did so with caution.

I arrived near the area, on the slope of a craggy peak high in the Balinok range. Proceeding with absolute silence, I heard what appeared to be a soft whistling. When I drew nearer, I saw a peculiar, skeletal creature of some seven feet in height, with dark, leathery skin, long claws and a large horn protruding from the rear of its skull. The creature was engaged in some bizarre ritual, one which even I had never before seen. I moved silently closer to observe the arcane rite, as well as to await the best moment to attack.

I sensed the beast was nearing the end of the ritual, which involved a hideous concoction of loathsome substances placed inside a magic circle, so I decided to attack. However, I was suddenly paralyzed both physically and mentally, as if held by a giant hand. Magical energies began to crackle in the night, flowing

from the ground and the circle into the beast. As it arched its back and screamed in triumph, I felt a sharp pain, and a terrible weakness—a sense of great loss as my power and connection to the Land dimmed perceptibly. I have not felt spiritual torment of such magnitude since I lost my beloved Tatyana all those many years ago.

A billowing fog erupted around the creature then, thick and swirling. Only a few yards in diameter, and moving with the beast, this fog was no natural event! Sweeping one arm through the tendrils of swirling mist, the creature smiled with apparent satisfaction. Whistling once again, it turned on one heel and headed off, the fog trailing after it like some bizarre cape.

The paralysis eventually passed, but yet I am left with a nagging sense of lethargy. This has not kept me from noting other changes in the creature, things not present when first I laid eyes on it. First, of course, the creature seemed to have gained in power. The aura of magic around the beast was noticeably stronger than before it completed its rite. Despite this manifest increase in its power, I could feel the area of my realm usurped by the beast had shrunken noticeably, perhaps by as much as half its original size. The area was now no larger than two or three armspans across. I know not the meaning of these changes, but now that I know of this creature's existence, I shall soon learn its secrets. This beast may not find our next encounter quite so satisfying.

—Strahd von Zarovich, Personal Journal.

Strahd's encounter with the Whistling Fiend illustrates a number of important points. From this account it seems clear that the Whistling Fiend drew power directly from the Land of Barovia itself, and in doing so somehow diminished Lord Strahd's "connection" to his domain. (What this "connection" that Strahd mentions might be, I can only guess. While it is a completely separate issue from the fiends, it bears further examination. Perhaps there is some power of the elder vampires that I have yet to discover. Or, and this is the more unpleasant of the possibilities, but most likely to be the true one, as further details of the Whistling Fiend's wanderings hint at, perhaps Strahd himself has been draining life and power from the land he rules through fell magic. And Strahd may not be the only one engaging in such activities. Through my review of the information on fiends, I have uncovered some rather unpleasant similarities between some of the most renowned sorcerers in the realms of the land. More on this later.)

It also seems apparent that the fiend accomplished this task through the use of foul ritual magic. Strahd is a vampire and wizard of great power, with an unnaturally long lifespan, yet he had never seen or heard of this ritual. It is, therefore, most likely that this rite is not a standard one, but either one natural to all fiends or a rite this fiend created from whole cloth (if so, indicating immense wizardly skills).

Finally, the unnatural fog which erupted around the creature certainly appears an effect of the ritual, if not its entire purpose. The fiend's expression of satisfaction certainly indicates that the fog was no mere side effect of its rite.

Land-Based Powers

Strahd's observations seem to make clear that fiends can draw new powers from the land. The true effects of the ritual, and the precise nature of these powers remain less clear.

In the passage from Strahd's journal, we see that after the conclusion of the ritual a most peculiar fog leapt up around the fiend. This fog moved *with* the fiend, swirling within its reach while the fiend gazed on with pleasure. In its movements, the fog centered on the fiend just as its reality wrinkle does.

Further, there is evidence to suggest that the Whistling Fiend may have gained other powers by drawing on the energies of other realms. A letter from the collection of the Aspasian family, an aristocratic line centered near Il Aluk,

describes this power—a hideous ability which allows the fiend to slay plantlife by just passing by it. (It should be noted that we have no evidence that the fiend possessed such a power when it was sighted in Creeana decades earlier.) The good monk Hubert of Atalan first noticed this missive while cataloging the family archives and, as he is aware of my interest in all manner of supernatural creatures, alerted me to its contents.

The letter was written some two hundred years past by one Alyn Dragant, a young cousin of the Baron Aspasian. In the letter, the young man describes encountering a beast in the deep forest. From his physical description of the fiend and certain remarks he makes on its uncanny whistling, it seems fair to assume that the creature in question is, indeed, the Whistling Fiend. As his party watched from a distance, they noted the fiend's remarkable, and horrifying, effect upon the land around it:

. . The creature left a trail of devastation behind it as it passed, leaves curling and dying, grass smoking under its feet. All plant life left in its wake seemed suddenly to sicken and die, and all that it touched was left a smoldering ruin.

And so we let the thing pass, daring not to disturb its awful tread. Yet I resolved that we would at least learn the origin of this creature, that we might come to understand what we had seen. With that, we determined to follow the creature's path backwards to learn from whence it came.

Young Dragant and his men found the swathe of destruction an easy trail to follow, tracking the fiend's path through several lands to the borders of Invidia. From there they could go no further, although Dragant's letter offers no explanation as to why.

Intriguing though it is, this account alone tells but little, providing no proof of the origin of this previously unobserved power. Yet, another letter found in the collection of papers Aimon Davidovich left me may hold the key to the mystery.

The contents of this account at first appear unconnected to the events in young Dragant's letter. The missive below recounts a gala affair in the realm of Invidia, hosted by the outcast Vistani sorceress Gabrielle Aderre. The letter was penned only a few days before Dragant's encounter with the Whistling Fiend. In light of the information from Strahd's journal it tells a most disturbing tale.

. . . The food was wonderful and the dancing divine, but her ladyship seemed to take no pleasure that night. The storm raged outside as if it sought to batter the castle to its foundations; it was a fay night indeed.

The Lady Gabrielle seemed pensive most of the evening, oft lingering near the windows or balcony, looking out into the stormy night with furrowed brow. I wondered somewhat at this, but knowing Gabrielle you should not be surprised that I dared not question her. As the storm reached its height, dear sister, so did the evening's excitement!

Of a sudden, the Lady gave a cry and collapsed to the floor. Though she had given no prior sign of illness, she was shaking and still, unable to move for long minutes. As her minions attended her pallor faded but little, and even with their help she was slow to rise from the cold flagstones. Although she insisted that she was well, she soon retired for the evening.

The shellfish that evening were blamed for her collapse, and the cook executed. Still, no others suffered ill effects, and I doubt that the food caused the malady. It will no doubt be the talk of the salons for weeks, my dear. Perhaps our good Lady has taken Lord Darrian closer into her "confidences" then any of us has guessed!

—Lady Kristia Llewyllen, Personal Letter.

The described symptoms of the Madame Gabrielle that evening match perfectly Strahd's account of the effects of the Whistling Fiend's power ritual. When we examine Madame

Gabrielle's symptoms, and her distraction that night, in light of Strahd's experiences and the proximity of the Whistling Fiend, it seems possible that the creature conducted another such rite in Invidia. This conclusion seems sound, given Dragant's account of the fiend's effusive use of a heretofore unnoted power mere days later.

It is most disturbing for me to consider this matter while I still struggle to comprehend the nature of fiends, but I think I may be on the verge of unlocking the secret of the many mystical and bizarre phenomena that seem to occur along political borders in our world. While Madame Gabrielle is certainly long-lived, there never seemed to be any supernatural reason for this, other than the life-extending magics available to any powerful mage. Now, however, I fear that her longevity might arise from some far more exotic magic, perhaps the same magic that gave Strahd his "connection" with Barovia. Perhaps, just as the Whistling Fiend seems to have gained in strength by draining power from the land, certain mages native to our world have been performing power rituals of their own. Perhaps these rituals are what account for the strange behaviors along arbitrary, man-made boundaries?

It is impossible, of course, to draw a firm conclusion from such a small body of evidence, but I have resolved to someday turn an eye toward the rulers and powerful of our world. It seems likely that the particular psychic energies of each realm allow the fiend access to differing powers, and perhaps even lend power to mortals as well. If this is true, it seems not unlikely that power-hungry fiends might make a practice of conducting their foul rites in multiple realms, always searching out new and greater powers.

The Price of Power

If my theory of power rituals is accurate, then it is probably perfectly clear to all readers why a mortal should wish to siphon power from the land. However, fiends are already powerful beyond imagining; why should they want more?

As mentioned, fiends, regardless of whatever else they may be, are on quests to escape our land. For all his might and bravado, even Drigor is trapped in our world, forever longing to return to whatever foul realm birthed him. I have already discussed the reality wrinkles that surround the fiends, and how, by reading Strahd's diary, these wrinkles become smaller with the performance power rituals. It is as though the fiend is becoming more closely tied to our world.

This, of course, paints a strange picture of the fiend. Although constantly trying to escape, it nonetheless seems to be tying itself closer to its perceived prison.

My first thoughts on this leaned in the direction that becoming firmly entrenched in our reality was actually an avenue to the fiend's escape: one must first be standing firmly on the top rung of a ladder before one can safely climb down. However, upon re-reading *The Madrigorian* in preparation for this volume and in an attempt to find additional weaknesses to exploit against Drigor, I found the correct answer:

Though it seems difficult to believe, even the Great Ones face temptation. They too know the sweet lure of power—tantalizingly close, like ripe fruit there for the picking. Reveling in the fullness of their power, the Great Ones must beware of powers that even they do not understand. Oh, the delicious irony and great tragedy! Even they may act as do the mortal sheep, and so fall into a honey-coated trap that they themselves construct.

Whispers of powers unimagined, promises of glory and freedom, worm their way into the spirit and wear on even the stoutest resolve. Give in to the temptation, though, and you may lose your heart's desire! This Land is sweet and seductive–with this Land nothing is as it seems.

—The Madrigorian, *Book IX, Chapter IV.*

This passage made me realize that just as I thought drawing power from the land might help a fiend escape, so does the unwary fiend.

The changes in the Whistling Fiend and Drigor's talk of a "trap" suggest the true price that fiends pay for power drawn from the land, as well as providing a satisfactory explanation for the variation in size of the reality wrinkles surrounding fiends.

As the fiend draws power from our world, and takes that energy into itself, its energies are, as I surmised, less alien and less apart. But, as the energies of the fiend move in harmony with the energies of the Land of the Mists, the fiend becomes tied to the Land and is unable to leave it. Rather than being the top rung of a ladder, then, our world becomes more akin to quicksand: all around the fiend are diamonds of legendary size, but they are scattered upon a bottomless pit of mud.

This is the "honey-coated trap" of which Drigor speaks. Those fiends who resist the lure of the power ritual create larger reality wrinkles and may still one day return from whence they came. Fiends who are tied to the Land may lose their "heart's desire," their ability to return home.

The final irony is that fiends are vulnerable to the same temptations that they offer to mortals. In this way, at least, they are not so different from humans. The difference is only in the scale of the power involved.

It is impossible to pity a fiend, and the irony in their situation is, as even Drigor admits, sweet. Yet, one must avoid the temptation to celebrate the spiritual pain of the fiend. Exultation at another's suffering is an unworthy emotion, motivated by the baser part of our human nature. We must ever avoid the temptation to nourish our dark side, no matter how tempting.

The Power Ritual

The ritual described here is what a fiend uses to draw new powers from Ravenloft. Each power ritual is unique, different from any other and different for each fiend as well. The only consistent factor is the horrible evil of the rite. Any character observing such a ritual must make both fear and horror checks in the face of such open, malignant evil.

Should the Dungeon Master wish, he may design a suitably evocative power ritual for any fiend in his campaign. The only necessary limitations upon the ritual are that it must occur in natural surroundings where the fiend is in direct contact with the Land, and that it requires at least six full turns to perform. The ritual must also be uninterrupted. Any event during the ritual that breaks the fiend's concentration results in the ritual's failure. Even the Lord of the Domain cannot actively resist the fiend's power drain save by actively disrupting the ritual.

A successfully completed power ritual draws energy from the domain where it is performed. This energy drain is painful and temporarily disorienting to the domain's Darklord, causing him or her to be incapacitated for 2-5 (1d4+1) rounds. However, even the minor Darklords are powerful enough that the draining effect of the power ritual has no further measurable effect.

It should be noted that Dr. Van Richten has misunderstood the source of Strahd and Madame Gabrielle's connection with the Land. They need not perform power rituals, as theirs is a natural connection.

Corruption of the Fiend

Each time a fiend successfully completes a power ritual and receives a land-based power, he becomes more connected to the Land of the Mists. The fiend succumbs to temptation by seizing power from the land. This is the corruption of the fiend.

Table Two: Fiend Corruption Index	
Corruption Points	Chance of Failure
1-2	10%
3-4	20%
5-6	30%
7-8	40%
9-10	50%
11-13	60%
12-14	70%
15-17	80%
18-21	90%
22+	100%

The Corruption Index

The corruption index measures the fiend's connection to the Land of the Mists. This is a new statistic for fiends in the RAVENLOFT setting.

A fiend's corruption index begins at zero (0) when a fiend arrives in the land. Each time a fiend successfully performs a power ritual and gains a land-based power, its corruption index rises by one to four (1d4) points. The Dungeon Master may determine this score randomly, or can assign a number. There is no upper limit to a fiend's corruption score. The effects of the rising corruption index on the fiend are set forth below.

Shrinking Reality Wrinkles

As the fiend's corruption grows, its reality wrinkle (or pocket domain) shrinks. Each time the fiend successfully completes a power ritual, the area of the realms dominated by the fiend shrinks by up to twenty percent (20%). The Dungeon Master may roll a twenty-sided die (d20) to determine how much the pocket domain shrinks, or may simply select an appropriate figure.

Bound to the Land

The second effect of the corruption is that the fiend may not be able to leave Ravenloft even if it finds and activates a portal or magic item that would allow any other character to exit the Demiplane. The land-based powers of the fiend may bind it to the realms.

The corruption of the fiend creates a chance that even a perfectly functioning portal or magic item will fail. In that event, the fiend is transported through the Mists to the precise spot where it first entered Ravenloft. The DM may determine the success or failure of a fiend's escape attempt according to Table Two, or may simply decide whether a fiend succeeds.

Land-Based Powers

At the successful completion of the power ritual, the fiend receives a new power from the Land. This section lists examples of land-based powers fiends can gain by conducting power rituals in certain domains.

These land-based powers are designed to add to the fear and horror that the players feel when facing a powerful creature with unknown abilities. The DM should feel free to create land-based powers to fit his campaign using the powers given below as models.

Barovia: This domain grants the fiend the power to generate a choking fog at will within its pocket domain. This fog is not poisonous, but acts as a very potent *confusion* spell, and affects every creature within the domain save the fiend itself. Victims must make a saving throw vs. spell at –4, with no wisdom bonuses to the roll. Those who succeed are unaffected, and may take actions normally. Those who fail this saving throw are affected as if by a *confusion* spell. This effect lasts for twenty-four hours.

Bluetspur: This domain grants the fiend the psionic science *disintegrate.* Using this power the fiend can cause up to eight cubic feet of matter, animate or inanimate, to crumble into dust. Inanimate targets must make a saving throw versus disintegration, while living targets and undead creatures must make a saving throw versus death magic. All saves are made with a –4 modifier due to the power of this ability.

Borca: This domain grants the fiend the power of *poison touch*. Once per day, the fiend can cause its touch to insinuate a deadly poison into the body of its victim. The poison acts on the nervous system of its victim, causing convulsions, profuse bleeding and excruciating pain.

The person touched must make a saving throw vs. death at –4 or die after twenty-four hours of terrible agony. Even those who succeed at this roll will spend an entire day writhing in the grip of this terrible poison. Characters may take no actions while suffering from the poison's effects.

Darkon: This domain grants the fiend the power to cast an extraordinarily powerful *forget* spell once per day. The fiend can affect an unlimited number of creatures with this spell. The area of effect being the fiend's line of sight. The targets of the spell save at a –4 penalty, with no Wisdom adjustment allowed. If the spell is successful, the targets forget all the events of the past 24 hours. This spell also negates all *charm*, *suggestion*, *geas*, *quest* and similar spells that have been cast on the targets during that time.

Dominia: This island of terror grants a fiend the ability to *cause insanity*. A fiend with this power may cause a victim to go insane, with no saving throw allowed, if the fiend properly executes the power. This insanity can only be cured by a *wish* spell. To use this power, the fiend must speak to its victim for 24 hours without interruption.

This "speech" may be verbal or telepathic, but need not be in a language the victim understands. While using the power, the fiend uses a droning, low-pitched sing-song that eventually drives the victim mad. Any interruption in the process ruins the effect, and requires the fiend to begin again.

G'Henna: This island of terror grants the fiend the ability to *cause insatiable thirst and hunger* on 1d6 victims within range of its sight, three times a day. Characters are allowed a saving throw vs. spells at –4 to avoid the effect. If the roll is failed, victims must consume any food and drink they can find (with the exception of items they know to be poisoned).

This magical effect lasts one round per hit die of the fiend. During this time, characters can do nothing but look for something to satiate their burning hunger and thirst. Victims believe they are dying of thirst and hunger, no matter how much they eat or drink while the magic is in effect

Har'Akir: This domain grants the fiend the power to *cause disease* with a touch. The touch of the fiend causes a hideous rotting disease to strike its victims. The disease causes multi-colored buboes to erupt and burst painfully on the victim's flesh. The released fluid immediately begins eating away at the victim's flesh. For every week the disease progresses, the victim permanently loses one point of Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity, and two point of Charisma. The victim dies from the disease when one of his physical statistics reaches zero. This disease may only be cured by a *heal* or *wish* spell.

Hazlan: This domain grants the fiend the power to detect the use of magic in its vicinity. The fiend may pin-point the location of a caster within a 10-mile radius, plus one mile per spell-level. It also knows which spell was cast.. For example, if a hero casts *hold undead* (a 3rd-level spell) within 13 miles of a fiend's location, the fiend would become aware of the hero's presence.

Invidia: This domain grants the fiend the power to *corrupt life*. This power is usable at will. The fiend emits ghastly psychic energies that cause all vegetation within its pocket domain to rot and die. All animals will flee the domain instantly when a fiend uses this power. In addition, the fiend's touch is both acidic and

putrefying, burning any living matter that it touches. The mere touch of the fiend now causes 2d4 points of damage, which is also added to the damage the fiend causes in unarmed combat.

Kartakass: This domain grants the fiend a beautiful singing voice, and the *siren song* ability as well. Once per day, a fiend with this ability may begin to sing a mesmerizing song. This song will last approximately fifteen minutes, and acts as a very powerful *mass charm* spell. All those who hear the song must make a saving throw vs. spell at a penalty of minus four to the saving throw. Those who fail are affected as if by the *charm person* ability. Note that there is no limit on the number of hit dice of creatures affected by this power.

Keening: This land grants the fiend a more powerful version of the banshee's wail. Once every twenty-four hours, day or night, the fiend may utter a terrible, unearthly wail. All creatures within 60 feet of the fiend must make a saving throw versus death magic at –2. Those who fail die instantly, their faces contorted in horror.

Lamordia: This land grants the fiend the power of "hyper-regeneration." This power allows for incredibly rapid healing when the fiend's hit points have been reduced below zero. When a fiend with this power is reduced to below zero hit points, its hyper-regeneration power takes effect. The fiend immediately regains 10 hit points per round until fully healed.

The Nightmare Lands: These bizarre lands grant the fiend the power to change the nature of the land around it at will. The fiend can alter the terrain, temperature, vegetation and appearance of the land within a two-mile radius (the outer limit of the largest reality wrinkle). This is not a power of illusion. The changes are very real, and all changes except temperature are permanent unless reversed by the fiend or a *wish*.

Creative use of this power can be devastating in combat, but the primary benefit for most fiends is the ability to toy with the land and its inhabitants. The use of this power particularly enrages the lord of the domain in question.

Sithicus: This domain gives the fiend the power of *shadow walk*. The creature may step into one shadow and emerge from another shadow in any location that is known to it. This ability may not be used to cross domain borders.

While *shadow walk* may seem inferior to the *teleport without error* power, this ability allows fiends to enter and leave areas that have been warded against teleportation.

Sri Raji: This domain grants the fiend the power to cast a more potent version of the *phantasmal killer* spell. Once per day, the fiend may create up to four phantasmal killers, as the 4th level wizard spell, and unleash them against its foes. The fiend then watches with glee as its foes battle their greatest fears. The phantasmal killers last for one round per hit die of the fiend.

Power Ritual Failure

As has already been stated, a power ritual will fail should the fiend's concentration be broken, even for a moment, in the completion of the ritual. However, there is always a 10% chance that the fiend will make an error in this exacting ritual even when not interrupted.

Effects of Failure

If the power ritual fails, a dramatic backlash of magical energy engulfs the fiend. This backlash stuns the fiend for one round, causing it terrible pain, as well as more permanent injury. Every time a fiend fails to complete a power ritual the DM should select one of the following effects or roll a d6 to determine the outcome.

1. The fiend suffers 6-60 (6d10) points of damage, and is terribly scarred by the magical energy. This damage may not be magically healed. However, 75% of the damage will heal with the passage of time. The final 25% of damage will never heal. For example, a fiend that suffers 40 points of damage from this backlash will eventually recover 30 hit points (75% of the damage). However, the remaining 10 points (25% of the damage) are gone forever.

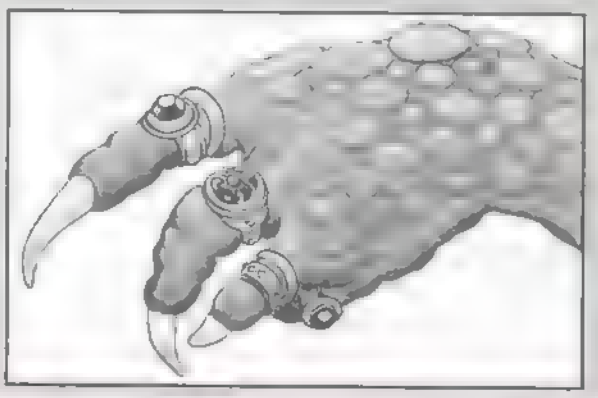
2. The backlash cripples the magical powers of the fiend. The fiend permanently loses one spell-like ability (DM's choice).

3. The backlash permanently impairs the fiend's ability to conceal its appearance. One of its limbs may no longer be *polymorphed* or concealed by *alter self* or *change self* spells.

4. The failure leaves residual energies in the body of the fiend. The fiend's Corruption Index increases by two points.

5. The fiend is physically expelled from the domain. The fiend is forever barred from that specific domain by the magic of the Land. (Of course, the fiend remains in Ravenloft. If a fiend were expelled from all of Ravenloft's domains, it would be forced to forever wander the Mists.

6. The fiend receives the effects of a failed Madness Check and a mental disorder from the madness table in the *Realm of Terror* book.



IV: FIENDS AND THE PEOPLE

nd be these juggling fiends no more believed
That palter with us in a double sense
That keep the world of promise to our ear
And break it to our hope

—Shakespeare, *Macbeth, V, vii, 48*

In this chapter we examine how fiends interact with the inhabitants of the Land of the Mists.

Fiends are cunning and terrible foes, their goals often hidden within the murky, swirling depths of their schemes by varied measures of careful manipulation and brute force.

Fiends delight in corrupting or terrifying mortals. They often conceal their true nature, using their powers of charm and illusion to move among the people in mortal guise. Exploiting the weakness in the human spirit, these fiends combine deceit, guile, and compulsion to catch foolish mortals in traps of their own making.

A fiend may corrupt mortals through pseudo-mystic cults devoted to its person, arcane bargains, and the usurpation of a human's body in a way more horrible than transfiguration.

Rivals for Power

The powerful and influential of the realms regard fiends as hated enemies. Flowing from their positions at society's forefront and the fiends' drive for more power, this enmity is a direct consequence of the inevitable clash of their interests. Indeed, how could their relationship be otherwise?

The fiend Drigor mentions the enmity between fiends and the leaders of mortals in *The Madrigorian*. The passage below describes this rivalry, and hints at its causes.

. . . It is ironic that those of power in our Land, purporting to lead the people, often are the ones who most fervently resist the wisdom of the Great Ones. This shows that power and wisdom do not go hand in hand! These fools are so blinded by ambition that they cannot see the truth. They clutch anxiously to their power and prerogatives like children grasping their bedsheets to guard against the bogeyman!

Our so-called leaders lack true vision, shaking with impotent rage at the coming of the New Order. Yet their shreds of power will not protect them! If they do not follow the will of the Great Ones, they too will be crushed and fall by the wayside!

—The Madrigorian, *Book V, Chapter XI.*

This passage obviously presents a self-serving picture of the relationship between Lords and fiends. Framing the conflict in terms of power, however, the fiend presents the crux of the enmity between the two parties. Fiends challenge the control of the Lords over their lands, servants, and subjects, scorning the rulers' authority and power while pursuing their own ends. It is little wonder, then, that fiends incite rage and hatred in the Lords of the realms! Also, persons like Strahd and Madame Gabrielle Aderre of Invidia who have somehow tied themselves to the Land, must hate the fiend tenfold.

Prey to Power

Fiends seem to see the people of the realms as fodder for their own desires. The monstrosities apparently think of us as no more threatening than dogs or cattle, and important only for amusement or serving the fiends' needs. Toying with mortals as cats toy with a mouse, fiends play many different games with their mortal prey. These games appear sparked by one of two motivations: the desire to terrify, or the desire to corrupt [Dr. Jethra Kilday, *Desire—The Unconscious Guide* [6]].

The Desire to Terrify

Certain fiends clearly desire to terrify, or terrorize, mortals. Deriving pleasure from their victims' fears, they perhaps even satisfy some inner need by their tactics of terror. While many fiends cruelly enjoy the terror their horrible power inspires, fiends whose primary desire it is to terrorize mortals differ greatly from the others.

Both Drigor and the Beast of Ehrendton use terror as a tactic in battle and cruelly enjoy its effect. However, they normally work subtly, lurking behind some front, as seen by Drigor's manipulation of the Madrigore family, and the Black Duke's bandit guise in Ehrendton.

The manifest powers of the Whistling Fiend, on the other hand, are vastly different. In contrast to its fiendish brethren, this horrid creature seems primarily motivated to terrorize the people and destroy the land. Destroying the village of Creeana and slaughtering its people, as recounted by Ashlan of Il Aluk, seems an act of random, malicious evil. The same is true in the report penned by Alyn Dragant, where the fiend was boldly using its power to openly scar the land with no care for secrecy, subtlety, or guile. The Whistling Fiend acts as if it enjoys—or at least does not mind—attention, desiring only to terrify and destroy [6].

All fiends delight in cruelty and the suffering of their victims. Yet, the chaotic tanar'ri provide extreme examples of these traits. As discussed in the *Monstrous Manual*, the tanar'ri feed not only on the flesh of other beings, but on their life force as well. They apparently derive more nutrition from a victim if they terrify him before the kill. Therefore, they particularly desire to terrify their prey.

The Desire to Corrupt

The vast majority of fiendish behavior, however, shows these creatures' love for guile and deceit. Carefully manipulating mortals, tricking and trapping them with their powerful intellects and great charisma, these fiends play a far more subtle game than the Whistling Fiend. Ever seeking to promote evil, they insinuate it into the hearts and minds of the people, and nurture its growth. Corrupting the people of the realms, they slowly corrupt the entire society, and thus seek to lead mankind to its doom [6]. The information below shows these monstrosities' foul desires, and discusses the major methods they use to trick and trap foolish mortals.

Cults

Although delighting in the individual "cat and mouse" game with each victim, fiends also sometimes attempt to manipulate and corrupt large groups of mortals. One common technique of mass manipulation fiends use is to organize and develop cults of mortal followers.

Consisting of misguided or evil individuals, these cults seem to slavishly follow the fiend's commands and turn on those who will not join their cause. The fiend builds its own power base through these deluded fools, who have fallen prey to the lure of the fiend's promises of glory, riches, or power in the coming order. Taking advantage of the greed and evil in the human heart, the fiend further corrupts its followers, and uses them to spread its corruption. The rosy visions of great rewards never materialize for the cultists; those who follow a fiend seem doomed to lose everything for a leader who cares nothing for them.

Developing and directing a cult requires considerable organization, discipline, and effort on the part of the fiend. Therefore, it seems likely that only lawful fiends will organize and command such groups. Nonetheless, I see no reason why a chaotic fiend might not fuel a cult as well.

Much of our information concerning fiendish cults comes from the captured journal of a cult member who followed the Black Duke. In *The Beast of Ehrendton*, Sir Ironhand mentioned a band of disreputable bandits who served that fiend. This rogue, Lertan Scarhand, served as

December Eleventh
. . . After dinner, we took advantage of our host's hospitality to arrange a tour of the grounds. While this was largely uneventful, the library in particular proved to be most interesting. It was packed with books, far more than one finds in most country estates. A large writing desk was overflowing with manuscript pages. Our hostess laughed when asked about her writing projects, dismissing them as nothing more than poetry and flights of fancy—the indulgences of a young girl. Yet she seemed ill at ease. She would not discuss the work of her ancestors, other than to say that the Madrigores were a "literary family." Dr. Farringer and I both noted an inhumanly large chair in one corner, half-covered by an old quilt.

At the conclusion of the evening, Dr. Farringer and I discussed the night's events. We concluded that the dinner invitation had clearly been given to investigate our presence and determine our motives.

December Sixteenth,
. . . Try as I may, I can find no other explanation. The thought of these foul creatures has tormented my every moment since our return from Edrigan. The sense of a malevolent presence—a brooding, ominous power lurking just outside the corner of my eye—has never left me since the visit to the Madrigore estate. Although my heart and soul rebel against my conclusions, the evidence is too strong. Dr. Farringer and I agree—fiends exist, and one resides in Edrigan!

Now we must endeavor to learn all we about the most horrible evil our land knows, so that we may root it out.

—Dr. Rudolph Van Richten, Personal Journal.

one of the creature's lieutenants among the so-called "Brothers of the Whip." Apparently named for the whip which the fiend carries both in human form and its natural shape, the cult loyally served the fiend by spreading suffering and evil through many regions of Nova Vaasa until its suppression. Captured with Scarhand, after a failed raid on the community of Drataan, his journal details his history in the cult. Analyzing the contents shows three distinct stages in the recruitment of each cult member: the Lure, the Oath, and the Trap.

Careful consideration of the pattern laid forth by Scarhand might help those who would combat fiends in recognizing their machinations.

The Lure

The first stage of the recruitment of a cult member is the Lure—the tempting of a mortal into the fiend's service. Note that the fiend keeps its true nature secret (at least at this stage) even from its prospective followers. Whether foolish or evil, or both, these mortals join the cult based on promises of great rewards (and perhaps some need to belong to an "elite" group [6]). The cunning fiend no doubt tailors its recruiting message to fit the weaknesses of its audience. The journal entry below, from two centuries ago, describes Scarhand's decision to join the cult.

. . . They calls him the Black Duke, and he looks the part—a tower of a man decked out in black plate and chain. The Duke said he's heard of me, and that one like me could go far once we take and hold what's rightfully ours!

I don't know about all this ruling Nova Vaasa stuff, but the Duke's a leader! When he talks about what'll be, a man gets a lump in his throat, a tear in his eye, and a fire in his belly. I'd follow him anywhere. Pays good too. We're joining his band. I hear there's a ceremony planned next week to "initiate" us!

—Lertan Scarhand, Personal Journal.

This passage shows the fiend tempting its mortal targets, using its charisma (and perhaps magical means) to paint a picture of a glorious future for those in its service. As shown below, however, life does not stay rosey for those who serve a fiend. Shadowhand realised, even before he died under the headsman's axe.

The Oath

The second stage of a cultist's recruitment is the Oath—the initiation ceremony at which the mortal swears his loyalty to the fiend and the cult. Binding the mortal to the fiend's service, this oath undoubtedly takes many forms, and the fiend crafts it in part to impress the cultist and to cement his psychological commitment to serving the fiend [6]. Yet the oath Scarhand recounts in the passage below appears to involve a dark ritual of blood-magic that binds the mortal to the fiend.

Never have I seen anything like last night! It still has my brain buzzing, but I'll try to write it now before I forget. The initiation ceremony was held up at the Duke's castle in the mountains. I figured it would be some mumbled words and a quick handshake before the party started, but it went nothing like that at all.

First, the thing started in the dead of night, and the Great Hall had been closed up all day. When they gave the signal to start, we found the Hall lit by what must have been a thousand candles. The shadows still pressed in close all around. Then I saw the writing—symbols and pictures covered the walls and the floor. I'd never seen the like except once on a scroll.

Standing in the center of it all, with a fire smoking in a pot in front of him, the Duke never said a word. He raised his arms, drawing us up in a circle. Once the doors were closed the smoke got thick, and the Duke commenced to sing in the strangest tongue I ever did hear. The whole thing had me spooked! I decided to make a break for the door, but couldn't get my legs to move.

The Duke called me out first, and took a knife out of the pot. He slashed his palm and then slashed mine, taking my hand in both of his as he brought me to my knees. Gods, his blood burned! It felt like his blood ate through my hand. The pain passed, and I stepped back into the ranks.

My whole body started to tingle, still does a little bit. I felt different when it was done, and I know I'm different now. With his power, nobody can stand before us! I picked a winner this time!

—Lertan Scarhand, Personal Journal.

Clearly this passage depicts ritual magic, a foul blood ritual used to initiate the Brothers of the Whip. This ritual appears to have no known parallels, and likely is crafted by the fiend itself. Based on the information below, it seems likely that the ritual magic of the Oath creates a bond between the fiend and its mortal pawns far beyond that of mere loyalty. The completion of the oath springs the trap shut upon the unwary victims.

The Trap

Fiends inevitably ensnare those foolish mortals who swear to serve them. After the oath, they draw the cultists further under their evil influence, trapping them in a web of deceit and corruption. These cultists meet their doom used, trapped, and corrupted by the fiend.

All the available evidence suggests that the fiend despises and exploits its followers as it does any other mortal in the realms. Desiring to corrupt and destroy all mortals, the fiend seems to delight in their protracted suffering. Therefore, the fiend rewards them only enough to keep them loyal. In the end, no one profits from service to a fiend.

The following excerpt from Scarhand's journal, written shortly before his capture and execution at Drataan, shows his dawning awareness of the trap. It may also shed light on the means the fiend uses to control its followers.

It's been awhile since my last entry. We've been campaigning hard, and since the troubles began I haven't wanted anyone to know that I'm writing. The easy targets dried up a long time ago, and pickings are slim. I'll never complain though, I saw what happened to Jess!

Three days ago, the Duke was mad at Jess, captain of the Second Company, about a failed raid on Drataan. He wanted to know what had gone wrong and who was to blame. Jess got hot, and told him that he drove the men too hard, and the raid was poorly planned. He was right, but none of us made a sound.

The Duke got real quiet, and stared at him like a snake watches a mouse. Then he sort of bobbed his head at Jess, who jumped like a scared rabbit. Jess started screaming, grabbing his head and rolling around on the floor. We just watched. Then he flopped stone dead, blood pouring from his ears, nose, and mouth. His body laid there for hours. Jess was a good mate of mine, and the Duke watched me close after that, but I kept a straight face.

I'll say this, no one deserts from this unit! A few have run, but the Duke personally leads the searches, and always finds them. It's amazing, the way he just looks into the sky and seems to know where to go. Baren had made it near 50 leagues, too, but that didn't matter. No one knows what he does with them. The Duke just says they'll be punished for breaking the oath. Sometimes we hear them scream for a while. No one complains, though . . . I just learned that I'm leading the next raid on Drataan.

—Lertan Scarhand, Personal Journal.

In this entry, Scarhand clearly sees that he is trapped in the service of the Black Duke and is apparently resigned to his fate. His other observations of the Duke, suggesting certain powers of the fiend, also merit close attention.

First, the fiend is apparently able to track his fleeing cultists over long distances with no more than a thought, and seems likewise able to kill with the same amount of effort. While it is dangerous to speculate based on one case—since neither ability has been attributed to fiends elsewhere—my theory is that these abilities come from a mental link between fiend and cultists, established by the blood oath.

The blood oath ritual is evil magic created by the fiend. This ritual is not a standard spell, but a ceremony taught on the home plane of the fiend. Creating a magical, mental link between the fiend and its mortal victim, the form of the oath varies for each creature. Due to the evil and alien nature of the ritual, any non-participants witnessing it must make a horror check.

The oath ceremony requires 24 hours to prepare, while the fiend meditates and readies the ceremony chamber. The ritual may be held at any location, so long as it is uninterrupted. Any interruption ruins the ceremony, and requires the fiend to begin preparations anew. The ritual lasts for two hours, plus an additional ten minutes for each participant.

Resisting the Oath

The magic of the ceremony transfixes its mortal participants. Anyone desiring to leave the ceremony once it has begun must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation with a –2 penalty. Such a departure interrupts the ceremony, with the effects discussed above.

A mortal who wishes to resist the bond with the fiend may attempt to do so when their blood mingles with a saving throw vs. spell at a –4 penalty. Willing targets receive no saving throw.

If the victim successfully resists the bond, the fiend will know that it did not form the link. This resistance, however, need not interrupt the ritual. Knowing this, fiends often allow the mortal to believe that they have escaped detection until after the ritual

Powers of the Blood Oath

The blood oath grants the fiend the ability to

sense the location of any of its sworn servants anywhere within Ravenloft. The fiend receives no details concerning the location, but can track the follower unerringly.

The second power granted fiends is the ability to hurt or even kill mortals through this mental link. The fiend merely concentrates its tremendous will and evil power along the link. The fiend may use this power whenever it can see the target and is within two hundred yards of the prey. When within range, the fiend may use this attack form at will.

If the fiend desires to merely hurt its victim, the mortal must roll a saving throw vs. paralyzation with a –4 to avoid the attack. If the saving throw fails, the victim is afflicted by excruciating, debilitating pain for up to ten rounds. If the fiend desires to kill its victim, the mortal must roll a saving throw vs. death magic with a –4 penalty. A successful save negates the attack; a failed save means a painful death.

Possession

Many fiends choose to manipulate mortals and tempt them toward evil not in large groups, but individually. Savoring the intimacy of the encounter, the joy of the seduction, these fiends promote evil and corrupt society one victim at a time. Perhaps the most chilling results of a foolish mortal's dealings with fiends are the cases where they steal the very bodies of their mortal prey.

A tragic letter came to my attention which seems to describe an example of a fiend seizing and then discarding the bodies of mortals.

Good Taliesian,

I write seeking your aid because I have nowhere else to turn. I believe that I have found the cause of the strange disappearances which have plagued our city, yet I know not what to do!

My name is Levis Adreyev. I am a craftsman of porcelain dolls. For several years now, the beautiful Madame Elsa has come to me with orders for dolls to add to her wonderful collection. She keeps them displayed in the front hall of her home, surrounding a beautiful cut crystal stone. In addition to the outfits that I have crafted for them, each of the dolls wears a delicate dab of scarf, or some other bit of clothing.

I've never wondered at her demands, always producing the dolls to her exacting specifications of size and appearance. Yet, good sir, I have noted that the most recent doll I crafted for her, strongly resembled Madame Ivanov, who disappeared some two months after I created the doll!

You may say that this is nothing sir, mere coincidence, but the evidence grows. Last month she brought that very doll into my shop for repairs to its outfit, and she referred to the doll as "Irina"—the name of the vanished Madame Ivanov! Moreover, that doll, sir, appeared to me to have changed since I made it. Every craftsman knows his work, sir, and that doll seemed positively flushed and rosy, far more life-like than I had rendered it. And the eyes—the eyes appeared to move and glisten with tears! I have invented pretexts to come to her home since then sir, consumed with fear by this matter. All of the dolls are flushed, sir, and all of them seem to glow from within!

I might still doubt sir, save that I have received another doll order. The description of this doll, sir, the features and face, resembles none other than my daughter Liza, married last fall to the guardsman! The resemblance is complete in every detail. When ordering the doll, sir, I noted that she twined and untwined a small scarf in her right hand. This scarf appears to be one I purchased for Liza last holidays! This cannot be a coincidence sir, and I will never finish this doll, but I need to know what to do! This woman is evil! We must rid our town of her!

Sincerely, Levis Andreyev
—From the City Archives of Levkarest.

Both Dr. Farringer and I were greatly disturbed by this letter, and resolved to investigate. In

particular, elements of the tale placed us in mind of the *magic jar* spell—a spell used by powerful and evil mages to seize the bodies of unwary victims. Since we had received word from Darkon of more recent and possibly related events, and our presence there was more pressing, an adventurer of our acquaintance, Astonby of the Oaks agreed to investigate the matter for us while he was in Borca. His report has done nothing to calm our fears.

Astonby reports that he interviewed the Most Reverend Taliesian, now retired and in poor health. The venerable man remembers the letter, but swears that the doll-maker was deluded:

. . . That letter seemed wild to me, but I determined to look into it. I went calling on the lady myself. My, but she did have a doll collection! No crime in that, though, and I found no evidence of any other crime.

Indeed, though I was prepared to be suspicious, Madame Elsa—I can still picture her beautiful face—put me quickly at ease. After I had determined that she could be trusted, I repeated to her at length the allegations of poor, sick Andreyev. I had feared that she would be upset, yet she merely laughed, and expressed concern for the poor man's health and mental state.

No, Andreyev was crazy as a loon!

—The Most Reverend Taliesian of Levkarest, as recorded by Astonby of the Oaks.

Astonby further reported that his inquiries revealed that Andreyev had vanished from his home nearly nine years ago. I fear that he did not live long after his suspicions became known! His daughter still remains in the city, but Madame Elsa had left for parts unknown.

There had indeed been a string of disappearances in that city, two or three women

per year for several years. Although all of these cases remain unsolved, the guard suspected the husbands, who in each case disappeared as well within weeks of the loss of his wife. The guards were particularly intrigued by the fact that each of these men were seen with a beautiful young woman (of varying description) shortly after their wives disappeared.

I feel these facts strongly suggest that this woman was a fiend. Based on the name, description, and inquiries into a more recent, related case, there can be little doubt that "Elsa" was the Elsepeth who entered our world through Ammie Weaveron 12 years ago.

The circumstances of the dolls and the disappearances, combined with the details of the scarves and the crystal, lead to the conclusion that the foul creature was using an ability or spell to possess the bodies of her victims [Dr. A.R.H. Tellurian, *Premises of Magickal Study* [7]].

To the best of my understanding, in the *magic jar* spell a mage uses a large crystal or gem as the focus for a spell of possession. The caster shifts his spirit and mind into the crystal, and then mentally attacks the victim as soon as he enters the range of the spell. At that point, the victim is trapped in the gem while the caster controls the victims' body.

I theorize that something similar has happened in this case. The scarves mentioned are most likely talismans taken from their owners to use to link the women to the fiend and aid the possession attempt [7]. The large crystal in Madame Elsa's living room would serve as an admirable focus for the spell, while the dolls could be special receptacles to store the life forces of their victims!

The pattern of these disappearances make it likely that the fiend was the same "beautiful young woman" seen consorting with the husbands shortly after their wives' disappearance. Perverting and warping the human desires for love, affection, and friendship, Elsepeth exploits the need for intimacy to corrupt these men.

Fiendish Possession

Fiends in the RAVENLOFT setting may possess the bodies of mortal victims, using an ability similar to the *magic jar* spell described in the *Player's Handbook*. The precise form of this spell-like power will vary a bit for each fiend. For example, while Elsepeth uses porcelain dolls as the receptacles for her victims' life forces, other fiends would pick receptacles more suited to their natures.

The focus for the possession spell is a large gem or crystal that the fiend must have specially crafted for this purpose. To form the proper link with the prospective victim, the fiend must trick them into providing some personal item for use during the spell.

After preparing the spell, the fiend shifts its spirit from its body into the gem, and awaits the arrival of the intended victim. An possession attempt may be made if a victim moves within range of the receptacle (ten feet per hit die of the fiend). The fiend may return its spirit to its body at any time, but this ends the spell. The possession attempt takes one round to complete. The target must roll a saving throw vs. spell with a –2 penalty to resist the attack.

Once the fiend has control of the target's body, it may use that body or dispose of it and reenter its own. While in the host body, it has full access to all spell-like and mental powers.

The life force of a victim of fiendish possession whose body dies is not automatically slain. Rather, its spirit is shifted into the awaiting fetish prepared specifically for the victim by the fiend. (In the case of Elsepeth, into the porcelain dolls.)

Reversal of Possession

Only a *wish* or *limited wish* spell will free the spirit of the victim from its special receptacle without the consent of the fiend. The fiend may reverse the process at any time.

Note that if the victim's body is dead, a *raise dead* spell must be cast simultaneously, or the victim's life force will perish.

Bargains

Bargaining with mortals is another common technique fiends use to lure them into evil Fiends manipulate mortals by appealing to the greed and weakness in every human heart They offer us our hearts' desire, demanding in exchange seemingly minor services or innocuous concessions. Ensnared by a honeyed web of deceit. the fiend's victim finds their glittering reward turning to ashes at their feet Ultimately, they lose their freedom, often their lives, and perhaps their spirits as well

The Spirit and the Letter

Every agreement contains at least two key elements: the strict letter of the terms, and the spirit of the bargain. The magical energy ensuring compliance with the fiendish bargains applies equally to both parties. This symmetry is apparently required to maintain the balance of the magical forces involved [7]. As seen below, fiends are thus strictly bound by the terms of their agreements—the letter of the law.

As the following excerpt reveals, fiends profit from bargains, and tempt mortals into corruption in a very different manner.

Inajira bristled at the very suggestion that he could not be trusted. "I am an honorable, honest businessman. My business is magic, contracts, and power! I strictly honor my agreements and act as any merchant would The profit margin in any transaction lies around its edges, and I work the edges in my bargains

"I lay out my terms very clearly and explicitly. hiding nothing from each customer. If they lack the capacity to understand the contract, they should refrain from doing business with me."

—Zartin the Red,
Autobiography of a Wandering Mage

This self-serving portrayal of the fiend does establish a critical point—that fiends trap mortals in these bargains by brilliantly warping the spirit of their terms.

A concrete example of the complexity and detail of a fiendish contract was unearthed by Dr. Farringer, in perhaps the most precious document that either of us has ever uncovered. During our investigations, we recovered and salvaged portions of the original contract between the fiend Elsepeth and one of her victims! The story of this discovery, and the text of the letter, shed light on the nature of fiends and their bargains.

The Temptress

While compiling our notes for this volume, Dr. Farringer and I received news of bizarre occurrences in Nartok, in the kingdom of Darkon. Several young couples had disappeared over the last two years. In each case, when their bodies were discovered, the woman lay dead without a mark upon her, while the man's corpse was a withered husk with burnt out eyes. This pattern seemed similar to the earlier events in Levkarest, raising the possibility that the fiend Elsepeth had surfaced once more. We hurried to Nartok to investigate.

Happily for our work, though not for the unfortunates involved, we arrived in the city just as the authorities discovered the sixth dead couple. The City Council agreed to permit us to investigate.

The couple was Tomas and Helga Tennemen, a clerk and his wife. In this case, the body of the wife lay on a slab in the basement, while the husband was sprawled on the living room floor. Although signs of decay were present, the bodies were in the same condition as the previous couples.

The neighbors had discovered the bodies after seeing no sign of the pair for several days.

. . . This contra t, entered into . . . between the lady Elsepeth, hereinafter referred to as the grantor, or the party of the first part, and T m . . . hereinafter referred to as the grantee, or the party of the second part, or the grantor . . .

. . . The terms of this agreement . . . governed by the laws of the territory of Rokushima, as they were in effect on the seventh day . . . month of the . . .

. . . the party of the first p . . . promises to supply erot . . . the grantee, the party of the second part . . . upon the satisfaction of certain specific and contingent requests by the party of the first part . . .

The party of the second part agrees that all obstacles to the successf . . . of the contract may be eliminated by the party of the . . . to include disposal of organic organisms native to the environment in question.

[Rudolph, note this phrase! I believe this is where Helga was lost!

—Clinical Notes of Dr. Ottelie Farringer]

. . . Upon non-fulfillment of any term of this contract by the party of the second part . . . forfeit security deposited with the party of th . . . par . . .

. . . agree that if the provisions of said contract are found to be unenforce . . . according to the limits of the laws of the . . . in question, they shall remain in force in any event to the extent that they conflict with the interest of the party of the second p . . . vis a' vis the grantor of the favors referred to in part Three of this . . . supra.

. . . Enforceable into perpet . . . with the understanding that all costs associated with collection of suc . . . borne by the grantee in the event of breach or unexpected contingencies . . .

Careful interviews revealed that no one had actually seen Helga for almost three weeks, though some neighbors recalled hearing a woman's voice from within the home. Cronies at a local tavern revealed that Tomas had been seen with a lovely woman, not his wife, the week before. All of these signs suggested the work of Elsepeth, but on a final sweep of the living room Dr. Farringer noticed the vital clue that I had missed.

In the fireplace lay a partially destroyed sheaf of papers. All of them had burned to the point where the remnants were little more than ash. Excitedly calling for her equipment, Dr. Farringer cordoned off the room and went to work. She first stabilized the remaining paper with a mixture of chemicals and clear resins. Then she used additional applications of chemical concoctions to bring out the ink so that one could again read part of the document. After several days of work, Dr. Farringer then began to analyze, copy and translate the document.

She noted that the script was in a rounded, feminine hand, the work of a well-educated individual, and our excitement grew as it became clear that we had actually retrieved a contract, which seemed to involve Elsepeth and Tomas Tennemen!

The recovered fragments speak volumes of the complexity and detail of a fiendish contract. Selected excerpts from that text are enclosed here separately. Let them stand as a fitting tribute to the scholarship, brilliance and energy of Dr. Ottelie Farringer.

The restoration of the fragments remains, sadly, incomplete, but it is clear that the clerk entered into a contract for the services of the fiend in the very house he shared with his wife. He may even have forfeited his wife's life in the bargain!

Tomas Tennemen paid the price for his misdeeds and serves as an object lesson of the perils of bargaining with a fiend. Remember, fiends desire to corrupt and destroy mankind. Therefore, if the fiend does offer anything of true value, the cost will certainly be higher.

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread
—Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

This chapter presents brief descriptions of the fiends who have made their presence known in our lands. I have attempted to summarize their powers and mentalities so that the reader might get a sense of the diversity of these monstrosities.

Do not undertake the pursuit of one of these creatures lightly. With them, nothing is as you might expect, and even your most dedicated research might result in a false conclusion.

The Black Duke

The fiend known the Black Duke is described by Sir Ironhand in *The Beast of Ehrendton* as a monstrously muscled, scaled beast with wings and a long, prehensile tail. Armed with a barbed whip, large claws and teeth, and a panoply of magical abilities, the Black Duke is a formidable foe indeed.

Although the Black Duke has not been heard from since the defeat of the Brothers of the Whip, it had been active primarily east of the Dnar River in Nova Vaasa.

The Black Duke is highly militaristic. Disguising itself as a powerful human warrior (still armed with a long whip), it organized, and led a powerful army of cultists on a campaign of destruction and terror. This behavior strongly suggests that the Black Duke has a fundamentally lawful, though evil, nature.

This fiend's is noted for a preference toward fire and lightning-based attacks, an aura of *fear*, and a mental attack (which may affect only those bound to the fiend through magic).

The Black Duke's activities suggest that it is equally driven by the desire to corrupt and the desire to terrify. It is likely presently operating a violent cult somewhere in the Land.

The Black Duke is a cornugon, a greater baatezu. (See the *Planescape Monstrous Compendium.*)
Reality Wrinkle: One half mile diameter.
Land-based Powers: *Forget.*
Corruption Index: 3.

Drigor

This terrible fiend is a tall, yet squat, monstrosity, with a huge head and mouth, relatively small wings, and clawed, three-fingered hands. Drigor may lack the ability to disguise its appearance.

Drigor most likely appeared in our world approximately four hundred years ago—the era in which the first volume of *The Madrigorian* was published. Drigor has made its home in Edrigan, a small village in Dementlieu, but has moved on since our encounter.

Drigor prefers to manipulate humanity through mortal pawns while keeping its presence and very existence a secret. For generations it succeeded in this goal, controlling the Madrigore family and using them as a front for its writings, *The Madrigorian*, a huge work of philosophy, poetry, and other musings concerning fiends and their relationship to the Land of the Mists.

Writing is Drigor's favorite activity and its preferred method to spread its corruptive philosophy. This sustained, subtle behavior, proceeding according to a carefully crafted scheme, convinced me that Drigor was lawful. I should have listened to Dr. Farringer's analysis

of the disjointed, careless structure of *The Madrigorian* itself. Drigor is in fact chaotic.

Drigor's confirmed powers include the ability to control the minds and emotions of mortals, tremendous strength, and the ability to create a *ray of enfeeblement*. Drigor appears immune to all non-magical attacks, and has a powerful resistance to magic as well. Only exceptionally powerful magical weapons injure this creature. However, the fiend's true name is known, leaving it vulnerable to *summoning* magics [7].

Drigor is a shator, the most powerful of the ghereleths. (See the *Planescape Monstrous Compendium*.)
Reality Wrinkle: One mile in diameter.
Land-based Powers: None.
Corruption Index: 0.

Elsepeth

This fiend first appeared in Falkovnia twelve years ago, transposing its form with that of Ammie Weaveron.

According to Tasha Weaveron's diary, Elsepeth's true form is that of a beautiful, young woman with large dark wings and glowing eyes. The fiend masks these unnatural features with some type of *charm* or *shapechange* ability, and has used it in a number of guises (always beautiful females). Elsepeth first appeared in a small town near Stangengrad in Falkovnia, and has since been active in Borca, Falkovnia, and Darkon.

Elsepeth works subtly to corrupt and manipulate mortals. It particularly focuses on males of the species, with the apparent goal first to tempt the men into infidelity and apparently then steals the spirits of their wives. Elsepeth has apparently never created an organization to support its activities. Her increasingly bold and erratic behavior suggests that Elsepeth is chaotic.

There is no record of Elsepeth engaging in combat, so its particular powers and vulnerabilities are mostly unknown. Elsepeth does possess a particularly potent *charm*, as well as the ability to drain the spirit from its victims. The appearance of the name Elsepeth on the contract with Tomas Tennemen indicates that this is its true name.

Elsepeth seems driven by the desire to corrupt. In Nartok and Levkarest it preyed on a succession of men, destroying their love and tempting them into betrayal.

Elsepeth is a succubus, a lesser tanar'ri. (See the *Planescape Monstrous Compendium*.)
Reality Wrinkle: One hundred yards in diameter.
Land-based Powers: *Forget*, *Siren Song*, and the *Banshee's Wail*.
Corruption Index: 8.

Inajira

Save for its recent encounters with Zartin the Red and his companions, Inajira has hidden its presence from mortal notice, despite a long-standing feud with Count Strahd Von Zarovich. Inajira appears as a human male with the head of a jackal.

Dr. Farringer noted an interesting coincidence concerning Inajira. The reverse of Inajira's true name is Arijani, the name of the High Priest who rules Sri Raji, a land reportedly beyond the Sea of Sorrows. This possible connection certainly bears investigating. Could the fiend have established its own kingdom?

Inajira attempts to strike bargains with all manner of creatures, human and supernatural alike. The fiend devises contracts of such intricacy that (it hopes) no mortal may discern the true meaning of the clauses and terms therein. Clearly driven by the desire to corrupt, Inajira uses these contracts to tempt mortals with largely illusory rewards, exploiting their greed and tricking them into signing away far more than they had intended. This behavior does not suffice to identify the fiend's alignment.

Inajira is a very powerful spell-caster with a high resistance to magic.

Inajira is an arcanaloth, a greater yugoloth.
Reality Wrinkle: One mile in diameter.
Land-based powers: None.
Corruption Index: 0.

The Whistling Fiend

The Whistling Fiend appears as a large, skeletal humanoid covered with leathery hide, and a deep red jelly. A horn protrudes from the rear of its skull. It whistles cheerfully while committing acts of senseless brutality. The fiend can disguise its appearance, but rarely does so.

The Whistling Fiend roams randomly, causing havoc wherever it goes. Driven by the desire to terrify mortals, the Whistling Fiend has been sighted in many domains, including Darkon, Barovia, Falkovnia, and Invidia. It acts almost as if it is drawn to human habitation, requiring the people's terror for its satisfaction. Its behavior is clearly chaotic.

The Whistling Fiend has the power to destroy plant life around it, and the ability to generate and control a *cloud of fog*. In addition, the slippery jelly on the creature's hide is acidic. The fiend is apparently vulnerable to cold iron, and, oddly enough, to acid-based attacks.

The Whistling Fiend is a babau, a greater tanar'ri. (See the *Planescape Monstrous Compendium* for details.)
Reality Wrinkle: Five yards in diameter.
Land-based Powers: *Corrupt Life*, *Confusion*, *Cause Disease*, *Poison Touch*, and *Cause Insanity*.
Corruption Index: 14.

VI: BATTLING FIENDS

e had heard the midnight bells jangling. If you permit this evil, what is the good of the good of your life?

—Stanley Kunitz, *Around Pastor Bonhoeffer*

Fiends are perhaps the deadliest foes any mortal could ever face, yet they have weaknesses. Proper tactics, preparation, and planning may yet win the day for those hunters who are powerful, smart, prepared, and lucky. Those who would hunt the fiend would do well to follow the suggestions in this chapter if they hope to defeat the creature while they and those they care for still live.

Detecting the Fiend

The first step in destroying a fiend is learning of its existence. This task is rarely simple, for the fiend uses its masterful powers of manipulation, illusion, and guile to hide its presence. A direct sighting of a fiend is of course a sure sign, but these are extremely rare. Yet, careful, informed observation can detect the more subtle signs of a fiend's existence.

The Wrinkle Effect

An aware observer can detect the presence of a nearby fiend by noting the effects of its reality wrinkle. As discussed in Chapter Three, the outward effect of a reality wrinkle is a very slight shift in the relationship between objects, and a shimmer in the air. Dr. Farringer and I both detected this effect, and I recognize it as the unmistakable sign of Drigor's presence.

This barely perceptible shift seems to be the most common effect of reality wrinkles.

The noticeable effects of a reality wrinkle are subtle . A hero must make an Intelligence check with a –4 penalty to notice the effect, and a Wisdom check at a similar penalty (–4) to understand what they perceive. These modifiers are reduced to a –2 if the character is aware of the existence of fiends. There are no negative modifiers if the hero actively seeks the wrinkle effect.

Unexplained Murders

Reports of a pattern of unexplained murders or disappearances in a particular region may point to the presence of a fiend. This is particularly likely if the murders or disappearances occurred over an extended period of time.

The key to this analysis, separating fiends from the more common murderous monstrosities, is the pattern—the signature, if you will, of the crimes. The fiend's "signature" will link these crimes to each other, though they be separated by many years or many miles.

Cult Activity

Evidence of organized campaigns of destruction, banditry, or ritualistic activity may be a sign of the activities of a cult—the followers of a fiend. While any group may be no more than bandits, or a more benign secret society, each report bears scrutiny.

Transformations

If you should hear a report that a person's physical form is changing, investigate immediately. While they may have been transformed in some other manner, these people may also be caught in the midst of transposition.

Attempt to halt or reverse the process, if at all possible. If not, kill the lost soul before the

process is complete! This is not a cruelty but a kindness, for dying in the Land of the Mists is undoubtedly a far kinder fate than transfer to the fiend's homeland.

Paladins

These warriors have a place of honor in the battle against fiends. Paladins are particularly well-suited to battle these creatures, and greatly assist in detecting them as well. A paladin's holy aura, comforting to his allies and hated by his foes, also affects the fiend. The foul beasts are loathe to approach a paladin, and seem to move and fight less effectively when they do. The passage below demonstrates the special antipathy between the fiend Inajira and Mrytok Greybeard, a veteran paladin.

. . . Mrytok stiffened, half-drawing his sword. "Gods men, look alive!" he shouted. "We are in great danger!"

Moments after he uttered those words, the creature appeared in the now-familiar burst of smoke. With fangs frothing, Inajira cried: "Away with you, old man! You and your kind are blots upon this land. I cannot stomach you. Begone, lest I slay thee now!"

Mrytok moved only to draw his weapon and raise it in formal salute: "Foul beast, you set my eyes on fire, for I know now that I have seen all the evil that lives in this world wrapped in your corrupt visage. Join me in the dance, then. If I need die I would count it an honor to perish while slaying the likes of you!"

—Zartin the Red,
Autobiography of a Wandering Mage.

This passage and others in the book show the natural enmity between paladins and fiends, and that paladins can sense a fiend's presence as well. This ability, otherwise unknown in the Land of the Mists, may result from the strong tension between the positive energies of the paladin and the dark aura of the fiend [7]. They apparently may thus sense the presence of a fiend, an invaluable aid to a group seeking such a creature!

Even though a paladin's ability to *detect evil* does not normally function in the Land of the Mists, paladins may still detect fiends.

Fiends are so evil, that their aura cuts through all interference to reach the senses of the paladin. A paladin can sense the presence of a fiend's reality wrinkle when he is within 60 feet of its outermost edges. This is whether he concentrates or not. The paladin may not know precisely what he senses, however, especially if he has never encountered a fiend.

The fiend, however, can also sense the paladin, knowing his exact location.

Gathering Information

Any warrior will confirm that one of the keys to victory is information on the nature and strength of the enemy. Such knowledge is particularly vital when facing a fiend. A single miscalculation can lead to tragedy and disaster.

Therefore, whenever hunters suspect the presence of a fiend, they must conduct a thorough, painstaking effort to research their foe and gather as much information as possible concerning its actions and abilities. While doing so, avoid contact with the fiend at all costs. Premature contact with the fiend will only warn it of the group's activities.

There are unfortunately few ways to directly observe a fiend except in battle. I cannot recommend that hunters attempt to infiltrate a lawful fiend's cult. The probability of discovery and death, or worse, corruption, is too high. Therefore, observe the effect of the fiend on the land and people around it. What powers does the fiend apparently use? How does it seek to corrupt the people? Is it given to guile and intrigue, or blatant displays of power?

Compare the answers to these questions with the passages in this work. Fiends are so rare in

the lands that the one you face may be described herein. Also, your observations of the fiend and its powers may allow you to determine the fiend's nature—lawful or chaotic—and from there lay sounder strategies and attack plans Careful research to determine the nature and powers of the fiend will greatly enhance your group's chance of survival

Phylacteries

Fiends enjoy a number of tremendous advantages in combat. I have already discussed their ability to *teleport*, but an even greater one is the fact that their spirits—their true essence—are stored not in their bodies but in a separate physical object. The only way to truly destroy a fiend, therefore, is to destroy this object. This power is very similar to that of liches, and may support the theory that fiends evolved from these undead mages [4]. For convenience, I also refer to these objects as phylacteries.

I first came upon a reference to fiendish phylacteries in the writings of Zartin the Red, during a passage where Strahd is explaining the nature of the fiend Inajira:

"The Vistani have been able to tell me that the jackal-headed cur is not so different from the foul lich. The beast bears its own chains. Not only does the fool need that precious book it seeks, but since entering my realm, it must ever be on guard to protect its own spirit as well Their divining magic—which is still, I must admit, more powerful than my own—tells me the creature stores its life in some statue or trin ket. As is the case with the lich, I am convinced that he who controls the fiend's phylactery may have some control over the beast."

"Then, we must find its phylactery," I said, still attempting to find a way to extend our quest; I sensed that we would soon be at our goal, and I knew that I and my companions would have outlived our usefulness to Strahd at

that point. "If we have it, then the creature will let us be."

Strahd looked at me with a half-smirk. "Zartin, while Inajira might foolishly have let me acquire his Book of Keeping, *I am confident that he will be a bit more cautious with his very life force. If you wish to seek out and battle him for his phylactery, you are free to do so on your own time. Presently, you have much more important tasks to concern yourself with . . ."*

—Zartin the Red,
Autobiography of a Wandering Mage.

Unlike the lich's phylactery, it seems that a fiend's phylactery need not be a precious item.

While the only fiend phylactery that I have had in my possession was Drigor's, a wondrous quill pen over two feet in length and crafted of diamond, marble, and gold, written accounts of the Whistling Fiend most likely reveal its phylactery to be the wicked pike it carries; it is a constant element of all reports. The same is true of the Beast of Ehrendton's whip.

Thus, it would seem, just as each fiend is unique, so too is each phylactery. Its nature and form are undoubtedly linked to some strong personality quirk of the fiend (Drigor is obsessed with writing; the Whistling Fiend with random destruction; the Black Duke with driving underlings mercilessly). While I am unsure what the destruction of a fiend's phylactery would result in, I believe Strahd is correct in his assumption that he who possesses the fiend's phylactery will have some control over the creature. I hesitate to extrapolate too far from one example, but Drigor did not attack Bethany while she held its phylactery.

As readers might know, the destruction of a lich's phylactery leaves it vulnerable to final and total death. Perhaps it is the same with fiends. However, during the short time I possessed Drigor's phylactery as I was unable to discern any method of destroying it; we needed it for another use. Drigor's phylactery served as the key element in constructing a device that negated his ability to *teleport*.

Fiendish Phylacteries

The phylacteries of fiends come into existence as the creature enters the RAVENLOFT setting. The Dark Powers split the fiend's being in two, creating for it a method to return from death.

The nature and powers of a fiend's phylactery in Ravenloft are similar to those of the lich. When a fiend's body is slain, its life-force immediately transfers to its phylactery. This occurs no matter where the body lies in relation to the object, so long as both are in the demiplane. The fiend may remain in its phylactery for an unlimited time awaiting a new body.

The Transfer

After resting for at least twenty four hours, the fiend may search for a new physical form. Unlike the lich, the fiend must possess a living victim. The rules for this attempt are identical to the rules for Fiendish Possession, save that the fiend need not await a specific victim. Its "death" is still humiliating and inconvenient for the fiend, as it loses the physical abilities of its natural form. Still, it retains its hit dice, intellect, and spell-like abilities, and remains a powerful foe.

Destroying the Phylactery

The means to destroy a phylactery vary in each case. The DM should devise a particular method suitable for his campaign. Indeed, destroying a fiend's phylactery may be the basis for an entire campaign itself!

If a fiend's phylactery is destroyed, the fiend dies and its evil essence disperses.

The Mystick Cage

The principal difficulty in forcing a final confrontation between you party and a fiend is the fact that the foul beasts are tremendously mobile adversaries. The creatures all seemingly possess the ability to *teleport*, and

December Thirtieth,

Just before nightfall, as Samuel and I washed the plates, I heard a frantic pounding on the door. Alarmed, we seized our weapons and rushed to the door. Dr. Farringer was due back from Il Aluk any day, and I feared . . . well, in any event I opened the door and was shocked to find Bethany Madrigore!

I leapt back, but then I saw her eyes. They shone clear and bright, and terrified. Clutching a large package to her chest, she pleaded with me to take her in. Without a word, I hurried her inside. Locking all doors and readying my wards, I bid Samuel prepare himself for any emergency. He nodded calmly, and continued pouring a cup of cider.

In the sitting room in front of the roaring fire, it was as if I had opened the floodgates! The young mistress of Edrigan began pouring her heart and soul into my hands as she described the terror of life with the fiend . . .

"He took me as he took us all, for centuries! I had no hope, but then you came! Please Doctor, you must destroy him!" I tried to soothe her, but she pressed the package into my hands.

"This is his, I hope it helps," she said. "It's the only thing he cares about. Keep it from him!" The shadows outside my window darkened, and she cried out in agony. She collapsed upon the floor. When I looked up from her dead form the sky was clear again, but my blood ran cold. I quickly checked the package and found a most beautiful replica of a quill pen, made from marble and gems. I knew instantly what it must be. That poor child had given us Drigor's phylactery!

—Dr. Rudolph Van Richten,
Personal Journal.

may have other useful spell-like powers as well. To force the battle on the fiend, its foes must somehow neutralize its mobility.

During my research, I discovered a magical device which makes it possible to hold a fiend. Although devised by the ill-fated Brother Micah, I know that this device works, for we used it in the battle against the fiend Drigor. A schematic diagram of the Mystick Cage is included for those who wish to build and use the device.

Construction

As with any magical item, the cage must be crafted with great care, from only the finest materials. Yet the relative simplicity of design and materials of this cage saves much of the time and expense common to such efforts [4].

The physical frame of the cage is a great wooden beam, which forms a circle. The beam itself must be three feet on all sides, and the circle should be at least thirty feet in diameter to accommodate the coming battle. The craftsman must cut a groove in the top surface of this beam, one inch wide and two inches deep.

Eight pillars, four feet tall by three feet square, are then joined to the beam at equidistance. The pillars must have sconces in their tops. Four other beams are also joined to the circular beam, curving up and across the center of the circle's area. These each connect two of the pillars, forming a vaulted "ceiling" for the device. Connecting at the very center of the circle, these beams should measure two feet square in width and height.

A low, sturdy platform must be placed in the exact center of the circle. This platform must withstand the weight of the fiend, and its dimensions should be approximately one foot in height by six feet in diameter.

Finally, a finely wrought, powerful bolt of cold iron must be driven into the juncture of the wooden beams. An iron chain, several feet in length dangles from it. A box, also of wrought iron must be suspended from the chain high above the wooden platform.

The device may be constructed in sections, and assembled at the site of the battle.

The *mystick cage* requires a minimum of one month to construct, at a cost of 5,000 gp. For each five feet in diameter above thirty feet, the cost rises by one thousand gold pieces, and the preparation time increases by one week. The standard rules in the *Dungeon Master® Guide* concerning craftsmanship and cost of materials apply.

Activation

Upon assembling the cage at the location of battle, the casters must fill the groove in the beam with *holy water*, and the sconces with consecrated tapers.

The final component is the true key to the ritual—the phylactery of the target fiend. Brother Micah's notes called for the utterance of the fiend's true name in combination with a summoning ritual, and for some item representative of the creature to be placed at the center of the platform. My advisors, however, decided that using Drigor's phylactery would make the *mystick cage* even stronger.

At this point, all those who will battle the fiend must be inside the cage. The ritual requires at least four willing life-forces. The caster then inscribes a circle of protection against fiends (see below) into the circular wooden beam. Lighting the tapers, the caster speaks the final words of power. With a roar, the phylactery transfers from the platform into the iron box, and the fiend appears on the platform in its place. The battle is joined!

The fiend is trapped by the ritual, and cannot leave the cage until the battle is done. However, the ritual also exacts a price from its casters: while the tapers burn, the device holds, but it also drains strength from those battling the fiend. To sustain the containment, the device must have four willing life-forces inside it. When fewer than four remain, the spell is broken.

January Fifth,

Dr. Farringer returned today and greeted the news of events in her absence with the mix of shock and excitement I had expected.

I have finally firmed up the list of those who will be on the team to go against Drigor, and there were a couple of unexpected, last minute additions.

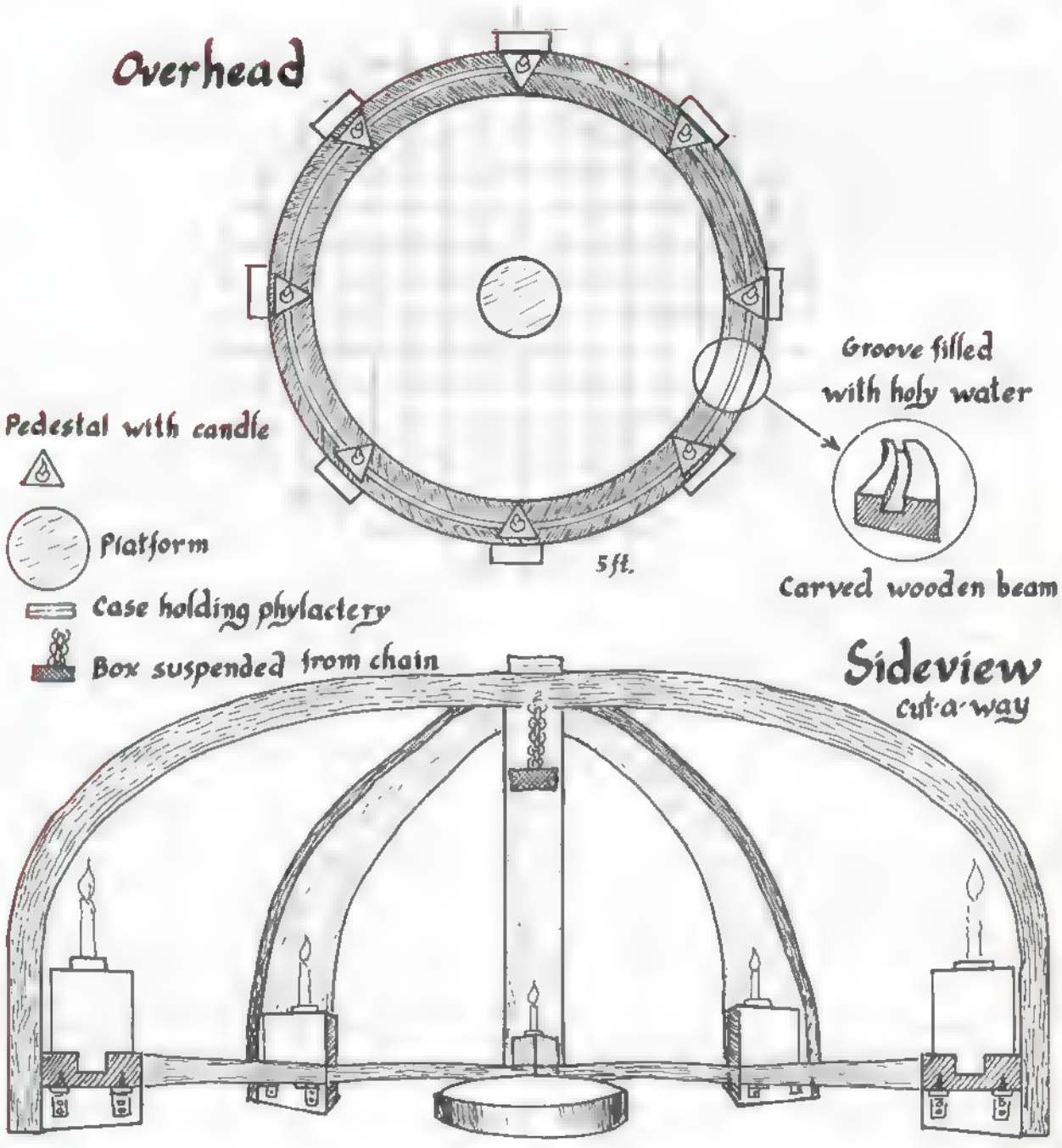
First Dr. Farringer grew furious when she saw I had left her name off the list, and will now be joining Annelyn, who has developed the circles of protection we will use and who will activate the Mystick Cage, Davyyd, priest of Tyr, who will provide much-needed spells and a hefty mace, and myself in the battle.

We were toying with the idea of a four member team, the ritual minimum, when Samuel walked into the room and wrote his name on the sheet in front of me. He said "Doc, you got nobody there who can swing a sword. You need me."

I chided him, saying that no blade was going to win the day against the fiend, but I could not resist the justice of his words. So . . . the five of us it is! We must make ready expeditiously, for Drigor knows we have his phylactery.

The cage for the ritual is nearly half-complete. The workmen are doing a superb job under Annelyn's supervision. The phylactery was the key, now that we have it we must strike! I have selected a location for the battle, an isolated patch of grassland, protected from observation and remote from innocent interlopers. The five of us are gathering each night to plot spells and strategy. I support five separate circles of protection around the fiend, one protecting each of us while we prepare our attacks. It is a sound method, and I believe it will work!

—Dr. Rudolph Van Richten,
Personal Journal.


Overhead
Groove filled with holy water
Pedestal with candle
Platform
Case holding phylactery
Box suspended from chain
5ft.
Carved wooden beam
Sideview
cut-a-way

The Cage Ritual

The cage ritual has two versions, one suitable for mages and one for clerics. In either case, the ritual is the equivalent of a sixth-level spell, requiring a twelfth-level wizard or eleventh-level cleric to cast. The spell requires three turns (30 minutes) to cast. It lasts so long as four of the original group remain alive inside the circle. The magic drains one hit point (1 hp) per round from each participant to sustain the containment.

The ritual traps the fiend and its phylactery inside the area of effect. If the fiend wins the battle, it is free to take its phylactery and depart.

Fighting the Fiend

While I have taken as much of this section as possible from personal experience and reliable sources, some of the information presented below is theoretical at best.

Should you seek to do battle with a fiend, proceed carefully, making full use of your faculties. Every fiend is unique, and thus every encounter will differ. Take all of this information to heart, and use what you may.

Weapons

Fiends are vulnerable to enchanted weapons, although it may take a particularly powerful blade to penetrate a fiendish hide. More readily at hand, however, is iron. We have evidence to show that the Whistling Fiend can be harmed by iron; it is possible that all fiends have this weakness. Nonetheless, I advise you to acquire the most powerful weapons possible.

Attack Spells

Any use of magic against a fiend is uncertain at best, as all fiends seem to have at least a partial resistance to spells. Still, magical attacks offer better odds than going toe–to–toe with the fiend.

Acid

While acid had absolutely no effect on Drigor, this resistance apparently differs for each of the creatures. The records of the city of Lekar contain an account of a brief foray into the city by the Whistling Fiend ninety years ago.

The fiend caused terrible casualties among the efficient and aggressive Falkovnian garrison. While units of infantry repeatedly harried the fiend, observers carefully watched the beast—searching for weaknesses. Yet the fiend's most serious injury came from its own actions in an alchemists' shop.

While in that shop, the fiend swept its pike across a high shelf, bringing a large jar of acid crashing to the floor. This acid burnt its legs terribly, causing the fiend to scream with rage. The fiend continued its rampage through Lekar, limping and roaring with pain.

Defensive Spells

When facing a foe as powerful as the fiend, strategies of defense are as important as strategies for attack. Fiends have many attacks, physical and magical, which can cause tremendous damage. Powerful weapons and mighty spells do little good if you die before raising your sword!

While a cunning brain and careful planning are the best defenses against the fiend, defensive magics are invaluable as well. Particularly vital are magical defenses which allow you to attack the fiend, but limit its ability to strike at you. Several examples of useful defensive magic are set out below.

Protection from Evil

Fiends are perhaps the most thoroughly evil creatures one will ever encounter in the Land of the Mists. The spells which priests and mages use to protect against evil may be of great use against these creatures.

It is my understanding that the *protection from evil* spell grants the recipient an aura of good similar to that of a paladin [7]. For the duration of the spell, supernatural evil creatures such as the fiend may not touch the body of the recipient, and find it much more difficult to approach the individual or attack them at all [4]. This spell is only useful defensively, for any attack on the fiend nullifies its effects.

The spells *protection from evil* and *protection from evil 10' Radius* function normally in the RAVENLOFT setting.

Circles of Protection

One of the most powerful defenses against a fiend is the circle of protection. Commonly used by powerful conjurers when summoning elemental creatures or other supernatural foes, each of these circles must be specifically designed for a category of creature [7]. Some circles are crafted to contain a summoned creature, while others encircle the caster and his allies.

The mage Annelyn designed several circles of protection for use against fiends, combining her own research with the notes we had uncovered. I provide diagrams of these circles elsewhere in this book, that all may share this knowledge.

One circle of protection is a "General Circle," protecting against all fiends. The two other circles of protection are designed to protect against subcategories of fiends—lawful and chaotic. Each of these circles is more powerful than a General Circle against one type of fiend, but weaker against the other. Therefore, you must know with certainty the alignment of the fiend before you attempt to use one of these specialized circles.

Magic Circles

Circles of protection against fiends have both clerical and magical versions. In both cases the spell is fifth-level, requiring either a scroll or a ninth-level caster. Two different types of circles are discussed below.

Protection from Fiends

This version of the circle of protection will protect the caster and all within a ten foot (10') radius against up to twenty-four hit die of fiends of the proper alignment. The general circle of protection guards against up to sixteen hit die of fiends. A specific circle of protection used against a fiend of an opposite alignment only wards off twelve hit die of fiends. Fiends may not enter these circles or attack individuals inside.

This spell requires six segments to cast, and requires no elaborate preparation. It lasts for five to forty (5d8) rounds. Attacks out of the circle are possible, as are attacks into the circle by fiends with more hit die than the circle can protect against.

Circles to Confine Fiends

Magic circles designed to confine fiends are crafted as part of the *binding* and *gate* spells.

Specialized circles of protection impose a –2 penalty on the fiend's saving throw to resist the circle when used properly. However, they grant the fiend a plus two +2 bonus to its saving throw if the fiend is of a different alignment. For example, if Annelyn attempts to trap a chaotic tanar'ri in a circle of protection against chaotic fiends, she gains a +2 to her attempt to control the fiend, or a –2 to its saving throws. However, if Annelyn mistakenly uses a circle of protection against lawful fiends, the tanar'ri gains the +2 bonus to its saving throw against the spell. General circles of protection provide no modifiers to either party.

VI: RAT-FELINE FIENDS

February Seventh,

My hands still tremble to think of it. Oh Gods, why her? Why not me? Why must the blood of those I love be spilled again and again?

One week past we battled Drigor. Tense but confident, trusting in ourselves and our cause, we went to meet our fate.

Annelyn summoned the fiend. A gross mound of reeking flesh appeared before us, cracking the platform with its weight. Nearly seven feet tall and almost as broad, its huge claws and dripping fangs completed the picture

Circles cast, we buffeted the fiend with potions, spells and fire. While some of the blows staggered it, Drigor was largely unscathed.

Then, the heady rush of battle left me. "My friends," Drigor said, "what have I done warrant such rough treatment? Please, let us discuss this like rational beings."

My companions faltered, too. I felt a wave of guilt sweep over me. An apology formed on my lips—how I detest myself for that weakness now—but Drigor spoke first.

"I, too, am a scholar and philosopher, Doctor. I'm sure we can settle our differences rationally." Then the foul creature looked at the glowing circles around our feet. It roared with glee: "However, if you want a fight, you will have it!"

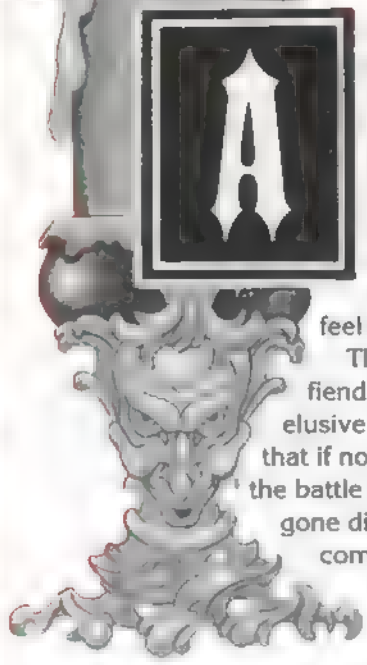
Drigor whirled, seizing Samuel and dragged him through the circle towards its maw!

I suddenly once again saw Drigor for the horrible creature he is. I threw a vial of the flammable concoction I had secured from the alchemist, but it had no effect. He sank his hideous fangs into Samuel, who screamed, oh how he screamed . . .

I blacked out. When I awoke some hours later, the cage lay burned and broken, and bodies of my friends lay all around me. It was hours more before I could think again. The circles were wrong, and it was my doing! I convinced them Drigor was lawful! The circles were worthless, and dear Ottelie—and the others—are dead

—Dr. Rudolph Van Richten, Personal Journal.

POSTSCRIPT



As I pen the final page of this treatise, I feel a great weariness settle across my shoulders. It has taken far greater effort to create than any of my previous works, yet much less has been achieved. I feel empty.

The evil embodied by the fiend is so monstrous and elusive. Still, I must believe that if not for my tragic error, the battle with Drigor would have gone differently. It is the only comfort I have as I stand over the raw earth of my friends' graves.

The fiend casts death and destruction about casually, delighting in human suffering. Its monstrous power is matched only by its brilliant cunning. Remember this, and beware! My conscience weighs heavily now, and I do not need more deaths added to this burden.

Every person whom I have cared for in my life has fallen prey to the forces of evil. From my son, Erasmus, to the present day, every time I have dared to love, to hope for a happier life of quiet contentment with a like-minded companion, my dreams have been shattered. Why am I spared, time and again, when so many good and brave souls die before my eyes? I know that I committed a great evil when I first started down the path I now tread,but surely I, and those I have dared loved, have paid for that crime. Surely, justice has been served by now? This query, which no research can answer, gnaws at my soul.

I hope the few words in this book will cause the reader to beware the fiend, and insure that the young men and women who take up the fight against evil will suffer less than I, and be purer of heart than I. In them lies our future . . . and our hope.

Bibliography

These are the sources cited in this work, as well as a small sampling of others particularly useful to my research. Interested readers should search out tomes to further their understanding of the enemy. Knowledge is our greatest weapon in the battle against the dark.

[1] Dr. Jacov Bluemenstin, *Philosophical Discourses Among Supernatural Beings: Higher Truths or Tribalism?*

[2] Ephraim Joonker and Legothlin Greenleaf, *Heightened Reality: The Sensory Powers of Sentient Non-Humans.*

[3] Dr. Daffyd Kelman, *Comparative Toxicology: Pestilence, Poisons and Plague Between the Species.*

[4] Archmage Jacktin Terelleian, *Wizards, Magic and Magical Items: A Primer for the Serious Scholar.*

[5] Glental Grimfoot, *Silent Speech: Mental Communication Among Supernatural Beings.*

[6] Dr. Jethra Kilday, *Desire: The Unconscious Guide*

[7] Dr. A.R.H. Tellurian, *Premises of Magickal Study*

Other works of use are the *Illustrated Manual of Linguistic and Scriptural Aberrations Indicative of Psychopathology*, by Dr. Ottelie Farringer; *Autobiography of a Wandering Mage*, by Zartin the Red; *The Beast of Ehrendton*, by Sir Armand Ironhand; and my own series of *Guides* to the lesser unnatural horrors that lurk in the shadows of our land.

Of all the terrors that lurk in the shadows of the Land of the Mists, it is fiends (even the whisper of the existence of fiends) that should most chill the flesh of stalwart adventurers.

Fiends are utterly alien, creatures beyond explanation from the darkest places beyond Ravenloft. They are living manifestations of evil and hatred, born of fear and torment, and fulfilled only by profaning and corrupting all around them. When facing a fiend, there is not even the remotest possibility of appeal, for the creature has no sense of mercy. Unlike liches, vampires, and other creatures of great power, the fiend has no niggling echoes of humanity and decency to which to appeal.

Worse, fiends have remarkable cunning and intelligence, and make full use of their powers to get what they want. Some have spent centuries honing their tactical and battle skills and can draw upon the knowledge of a thousand life times. Add to this the fact that fiends are nearly impossible to destroy, and you have an enemy worthy of only the greatest adventurers and the most dangerous campaigns.

Because of the immense power fiends possess, the Dungeon Master should use caution when introducing one of these creatures into his campaign. Remember, that in the history of Ravenloft, less than a dozen fiends have walked that shadowed land. The true nature and powers of these creatures are still mysteries even to the most well-prepared adventurer. The characters should always remain uncertain of just how far their enemy's powers extend.

This chapter is devoted to giving the DM hints for creating terrifying, challenging fiendish adventures. If a fiend is used to its utmost advantage, the process of challenging and defeating such a foe can be the crowning achievement in any adventurer's career.

However, as useful as the following material may be, it nonetheless pales beside the stories that are the origin of the fiendish themes discussed in this volume. When creating a particular fiend for a RAVENLOFT campaign, DMs can find unlimited inspiration in classic tales of temptations, supernatural bargains gone wrong, and the consequences of accepting deals that are too good to be true. Many stories and books found at the local library, such as *The Devil and Daniel Webster, The Monkey's Paw, Faust,* and *Paradise Lost,* can provide ideas for developing personalities and scenarios that will hold players on the edge of their seats.

The Creation of Fiends

Whenever the Dungeon Master decides to use a fiend in a campaign, he must spend a certain amount of time developing its personality, motivations, and goals. Fiends are never "just monsters." They should be treated as complex, fully realized characters with goals and survival instincts at least as focused as player characters.

Fiendish Types

The first step to designing such a unique adversary is to decide what type of fiend to use; the *PLANESCAPE Monstrous Compendium is* an invaluable tool in this effort. The DM should also consider the power level of the player characters and decide what sort of fiend would be a challenge for them without automatically defeating them. The DM should also decide what sorts of fiends are likely to have the chance to enter Ravenloft through transposition or summoning.

With these criteria in mind, several types of fiends can be eliminated from consideration.

From those that are left, the DM should select the one most suited to the storyline that will feature the fiend; the crusade against a succubus should have a totally different flavor than that against a pit fiend.

Fiendish Personalities

While the PLANESCAPE *Monstrous Compendium* appendices detail the basic personality structure of each type of fiend, the needs of a RAVENLOFT campaign go beyond those simple paragraphs. In a Ravenloft campaign, DMs need to take the fiend beyond its standard monster description, bringing it forth as a unique and fully-developed individual.

Initial questions to consider when detailing a fiend's personality are these:

•Why did the fiend come to Ravenloft? Did it have a choice? Was it summoned, did it arrive through transposition, and was it aware of the possibility of imprisonment before it arrived?

•What is the fiend's main goals in Ravenloft and on its native plane? Does it wish to escape the Demiplane of Dread, or is it relieved to be freed from its duties in the Blood War? Does it have grand objectives that it keeps secret even from other fiends?

•How does the fiend feel about being trapped in Ravenloft? What steps is it taking to escape? Has it been seduced by the Land, and if it has, what Land-based powers has it been granted? What price has it paid for these powers?

•How does the fiend interact with mortals? Does it interact directly with mortals (either in its natural form or *shapechanged*), or does it operate through minions? Is it cold and calculating or does it enjoy becoming passionately involved in their corruption and destruction? What powers does it use the most when carrying out its plans?

•Who does the fiend rely upon (if anyone)?

What sorts of minions does it require, and how does it attract them and bind them to itself? Does it reward its minions or frighten them into submission? How loyal are the minions and followers of the fiend? Do they realize what sort of creature they serve or are they being deceived? If its minions construct a series of lies, how does it keep track of what they are doing?

•How will the fiend react if confronted by another fiend, especially one of a type that normally rounds up and punishes those shirking their duty to the Blood War?

•Who are the fiend's enemies? Why are they at odds with it? How does this enmity affect the fiend—and the adventurers? Would they assist the heroes in trying to destroy it? Would they expect some sort of reward for doing so? And are they indeed the fiend's enemies, or are they just another layer of the fiend's lies—minions acting as if they are enemies just to ferret out the fiend's opposition?

Among the possible basic fiendish personalities created upon considering the above questions are:

The Manipulator: Manipulation and deception are standard elements of the personality of almost any fiend. The fiend weaves complex plots to amuse itself, to promote evil, to ensure its survival, and to pursue its goals of power and freedom.

Masters of manipulation, fiends are especially adept at the techniques of destruction by persuasion, convincing mortals to destroy themselves and those they love. Fiends carry out much of their actions through mortal pawns whom they have possessed, seduced, or otherwise manipulated.

Much of a fiend's efforts will take the form of agreements and contracts with mortals, from the initiation of transposition and throughout its efforts to deepen the shadows of Ravenloft even further. All fiends, whether Lawful or Chaotic, are honor-bound by the strict letter of their agreements with mortals, but twist the spirit of the words, taking advantage of every vague phrase and every opportunity for willful misunderstanding.

Most fiends prefer to reveal as little as possible of their true nature to all save their closest minions. They are generally skilled in arts such as *shapechanging*, *suggestion*, and other magical forms of deception. They often appear in a helpless or sympathetic mortal guise, appealing to adventurers to aid them in some seemingly innocuous or worthy task.

The fiend's true goals should remain mysterious to all but itself, hidden beneath layers of meaning in the same way that the fiend remains hidden behind a series of agents, and/or shifting forms. For example, a fiend attempting to gain control of an artifact that might turn all residents of Mordent into mindless drones under its control, might use an institution of higher learning as its front. While the teachers and students at this academy espouse the lofty goals of educating even the lowliest peasant so he may become a free thinker and captain of his destiny, all new students must first spend three months in total isolation from the rest of the world. During this time, the hapless individuals are stripped of all free will and original personality through torture and spells, then "reprogrammed" into unswervingly loyal minions of the fiend.

The DM should also remember that fiends are age-old creatures with vast experience to draw upon. Fiends almost never rely on only one plan of corruption or one means of escape, preferring to leave themselves multiple options.

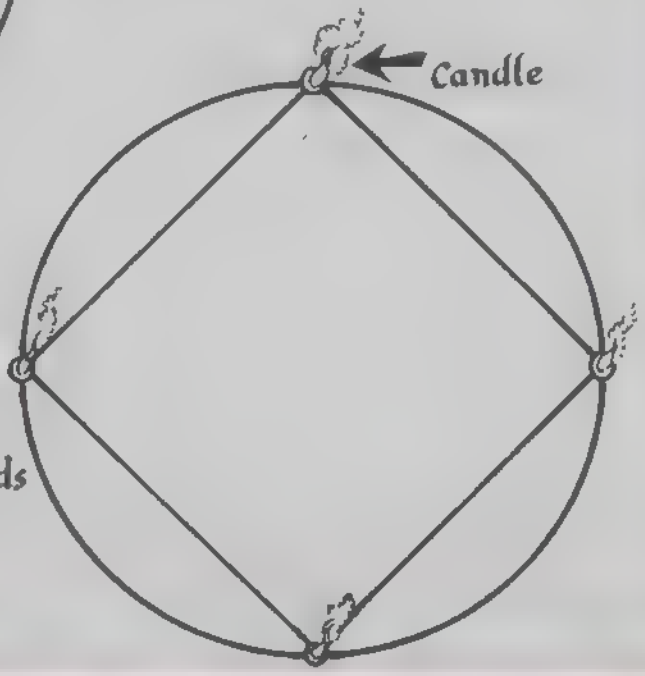
Driven By Frustrated Obsession: The fiends that currently dwell in the Land of the Mists are major forces in their own right, and yet are in every meaningful way as much prisoners in Ravenloft as the player characters.

Fiends are used to moving through many planes of existence at will; here, although the fiend may be able to move through the Mists and cross the borders of the various domains

Circle of Protection
Against Lawful Fiends

Candle

Circle of Protection
Against Chaotic Fiends



Circle of Protection
Against (Generic) Fiends

unchallenged, they are unable to leave Ravenloft. This inability to come and go as it pleases is a painful, claustrophobic state for a creature used to traversing multiple realities with but a thought, and many fiends devote their best efforts to finding a way out.

Eventually, most fiends become so desperate to escape that they fall prey to temptation, and seize some of the power they can gain by yoking themselves to the Land. If the fiend is not careful, it will find itself an integral part of Ravenloft, and thus unable to leave the land even should it manage to find some means of escape. Additionally, the fiend's circle of influence is very small to begin with, and becomes smaller with every new power the fiend accepts from the Land, circumscribing it more and more.

In effect, the fiend falls victim to the same temptations it uses so readily to corrupt mortals. As it recognizes the true nature of the trap, it is not unaware of this great irony. Each fiend reacts differently to this turn of events, but most fiends find the irony unbearable.

Fiends of this kind tirelessly attempt to discover or create magical gates or other means of escape. They will often use mortal-newcomers to the RAVENLOFT setting as pawns in their elaborate, long-ranging schemes, such as trying to transform the labyrinthine sewer systems of Richemulot into gates to any number of the Abyssal Planes. When its schemes fail, the fiend vents its frustration on its pawns (an event that could spell the doom of an entire city and all but the cleverest of player characters), and grows ever more determined to prove its superiority by finding some way out. Of course, this requires more power, which the Land can so easily provide, but then it becomes even harder to leave . . . .

The Philosopher: Certain fiends, such as Drigor, Van Richten's shator enemy, take a more philosophic attitude toward being trapped in Ravenloft. Such a fiend is an erudite intellectual who takes great pleasure in attempting to dissect the nature of its circumstances. Philosopher fiends tend to involve themselves in complex studies of the nature of the Land itself, often sending mortal pawns into any sort of situation or location where their actions (or mere presence) is likely to answer some question about Ravenloft. In essence, these fiends use the mortals that surround them as a scientist uses rats in a laboratory.

Of course, such a fiend's curiosity and intellectual exploration do not in any way mitigate its utter, vicious evil. Rather, its evil will often come through most clearly in the cold and callous way it uses sentient mortals in its experiments, inflicting untold physical, mental, and emotional suffering in the pursuit of knowledge. Whether it operates in a quiet laboratory, tricks player characters into entering the vast emptiness of the Shadow Rift, or incites a war to study the psychology of mass hysteria under stress, the fiend cares nothing for any being other than itself.

To these ends, the philosopher fiend may roam the Lands in whatever guise best suits its purpose, or may remain in a particular laboratory or library for decades. Even more than its freedom, such a fiend desires to control what they view as immense evil expressed by the Dark Lords. A fiend capable of discovering the secrets of the true nature of the Land of the Mists might well become the single most powerful creature in existence!

The Blood Warrior: Although residents of Ravenloft are unaware that fiends have their own societies and social structures on their home planes, the fiends have not forgotten their heritage.

Certain fiends (for example gelugon or balor) remain primarily focused on the Blood War, the epic conflict between the baatezu and tanar'ri for the total control of all that is evil. The ultimate goal of this type of fiend is still victory for itself and its kin, even if that contest is far removed from the Demiplane of Dread. In fact, this fiend may have originally come to

Ravenloft to harvest more minions to serve as slaves or other pawns in the war.

Although still obsessed with finding a way to leave the Demiplane of Dread, this type of fiend constantly pursues raw power so that it can return in triumph to the Outer Planes. For the Blood Warrior, nothing would be worse than to escape Ravenloft and having to report to its superiors that it spend a century doing nothing for the cause. Because of the fiend's perceived need for raw power and resources, it is more likely to come into direct conflict with the domain lords . . . and the heroes may be caught in the middle.

The Blood Warrior recruits mortals tainted by the dark powers, makes deals with Domain Lords, and does anything else that might give it an edge when it returns to its home plane.

This fiend also carries the rivalries of the Blood War with it into Ravenloft, and if it learns of the presence of any other fiends (particularly one from the opposing side), it will likely seek to continue the war on this new battleground.

For example, if the Whistling Fiend entered Nova Vaasa, the Black Duke would undoubtedly learn of its presence. Being of a fanatical military mindset, the Black Duke would unleash all its might, including loyal cultists and its own fiendish powers to destroy this "enemy scout." Since it is standard procedure on the Outer Planes to wage war with little concern for collateral damage, this miniature version of the Blood War could devastate entire regions of Ravenloft, and averting such a collision of evils is the stuff of epic tales.

The Servant of the Land: The Servant of the Land is a fiend now dedicated almost solely to building a power base and expanding its domain in the Land of the Mists. Whether it is

conscious of this servitude or not, this fiend has been seduced by the Land. It is so tied to the Land that its desires and efforts to return to the other planes have greatly weakened. The power offered by the Land, and the many souls there for the taking, have seduced this fiend as thoroughly as the fiend has ever seduced a mortal. As with its mortal victims, a fiend seduced by the Land has lost control, lost the will and ability to make its own destiny. It is trapped.

The primary interests of this fiend are now the expansion of its own pocket domain, the reality wrinkle (an impossible task given the nature of its bargains with the Land), increasing its personal power, and influencing more mortals to fall under the sway of evil. If fiends were not so utterly evil, it might be truly pitiable to find a fiend that believes it is struggling to break free of Ravenloft when all the while it works to further enslave itself to the Land.

Heroes are likely to encounter this kind of fiend serving as the head of a cult that is devoted to new and magnanimous gods. The "deities" of this pantheon will always be touted as watching over the cultists, and as growing stronger from their acting out their innermost desires. Since "services" always take place out-of-doors in natural settings, it is likely that this fiendish cult will be mistaken for a twisted kind of druidic order. However, the violent and depraved nature of the worshippers—and their leader—should soon dispel such confusion. Soon, it should become evident that this cult is working to drain power from the Land, to strengthen their leader so he may "travel to the Great Beyond."

Of course, a fiend who has recognized the intimate connection of the Domain Lords to the Land may seek to establish such a connection for itself. Such a fiend may seek to destroy a Dakrlord rather than ally with him or her, hoping to gain control over the entire domain. The heroes may even be pressed into service, or used as pawns by one side or the other.

Other personalities, and any combination of the above, are possible, and should be dictated by the needs of the DM's storyline. Once a basic personality of the fiend has been determined, certain finishing details should be added.

Prime among these are the Land-based powers the fiend may have received. The interaction between the fiend and the Land has trapped it based on the promise of that power, so each fiend will therefore call forth different powers from the Land. DMs should feel free to develop unique Land-based powers besides those described in this volume. Such powers, when designed with attention to balance and playability, add to the flavor of a campaign and keep the characters wary.

The DM should also create flaws and weaknesses in addition to the ones mentioned in Van Richten's discussion. These can be flaws in the fiend's character or judgment as well as physical weaknesses.

Each fiend should have some weakness that the heroes can exploit, some chink in its apparent invulnerability, so they have a chance of defeating it with skill, good role-playing, and determination.

One possible weakness is overconfidence. Because they are among the most powerful beings in Ravenloft, fiends may underestimate opponents. A fiend may be bored from its long years of imprisonment and decide to play with dangerous adventurers for amusement.

Another fiend may have a tendency toward procrastination or habitually over-plan its schemes. Having centuries of life behind them and contemplating such a long span in their futures, many fiends take a long time in planning and are perhaps too meticulous, or feel that tomorrow is as good a time to respond to something as today.

Finally, a fiend's own love of tangled webs of deception may be its weakness. Masters of deceit, fiends are often unable or unwilling to trust others, even their allies. Some fiends may be incapable of uttering the truth even when doing so might serve them better.

Regardless of its weaknesses, the DM must always bear the fiend's cunning and intelligence in mind. Under most usual circumstances, a fiend is more than intelligent enough to compensate for its weaknesses; but they will only become evident if the heroes succeed in rattling the creature first.

Writing Fiend Adventures

There are four core themes which, together or separately, should play a role in an adventure featuring a fiend: *deception*, *corruption*, *terror*, and *devastation*. When a party crosses paths with one of these entities, it is a (if not *the*) major campaign event, with ramifications not soon forgotten. When the heroes tangle with fiends, they should feel lucky to return with their lives and alignments intact.

Deception

The fiends trapped within the Mists of Ravenloft have frighteningly dark intellects, and practice deception on a grand scale to achieve their ends. Adventures centering around deception, as many or most adventures involving fiends will, contain layer upon layer of agents and hidden meaning. Nothing will be as it seems.

Entire campaigns can be built around the theme of deception, with the party striving to separate fact from fiction, to discover the whole truth, and to learn the identity of their nemesis.

A common element of an adventure based on deception will be the pitfalls of bargaining with a fiend. Fiends adeptly prey on mortals in their moments of weakness, offering quick and easy solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems, or promises of wealth and power to those who covet material success. Bargains struck with these monsters may result in some short term gain for those who deal, but in the long run the hidden costs of the bargain takes their toll.

Mortals who rely on a fiend rather than themselves are drawn into a cycle of dependency. They become so accustomed to relying on the fiend and its powers (even when those powers deliver less than was promised or exact a terrible price) that they find themselves no longer able to exist on their own. They become creatures without free will, pawns to the powers of darkness. Trapped, the victims are doomed to watch their downfall approach.

In an adventure of deception, the heroes seek to right what went wrong, or perhaps to find the cause of the distress and avenge themselves or their friend. However, such investigations can lead the heroes onto the trail of the fiend, and can also provide clues about the nature, powers and motives of the enemy. It is very difficult for the heroes to truly solve the problems that put them on this path, for they generally cannot change the past, cannot force the fiend to change the past, and dare not bargain with the fiend for satisfaction lest further disaster result. Perhaps, then, they can embark on a quest to prevent the fiend from completing the corruption of another mortal, averting a similar disaster elsewhere . . . or perhaps the fiend tricks them into an unwitting bargain that traps them in its web of deceit as well.

Another possibility for adventure sees the fiend directly manipulating the heroes (or their enemies) to serve its own goals or needs. Either in disguise or through agents, the fiend hires the heroes or provides them with some information concerning a monster, treasure, or mystery that they are sure to act upon. Regardless of the quest, the efforts and suffering of the heroes go to further the cause of this foul creature. Often, the heroes may not even realize they have been used to further evil until after the damage sought by the fiend has been done.

A fiend might also use the characters' greatest desires against them by appearing to be a friend. It might, for example, urge them to build or discover a portal out of the Demiplane of Dread and support them against all who

oppose them. In this adventure, the fiend would not harm the characters, for they are, in effect, acting as its minions. Once the portal is secured, the fiend would use its powers to go through and try to destroy it so the characters can not follow. Of course, as it escapes, the fiend would reveal its true nature, leaving the heroes trapped in Ravenloft knowing they had loosed a great evil on countless unsuspecting realities.

One thing for DMs to remember is to, even in a campaign built entirely around deception, give the heroes glimpses of the truth through the lies. First, this allows them to eventually defeat the fiend, if they are cunning enough; while fiends are terribly intelligent, they are fallible. Second, there are few things more terrifying for heroes to be stranded on an island, surrounded by a stormy sea, only to learn from a hermit that their supposed benefactor is, at that very moment, preparing to slay the maiden they were trying to protect.

Corruption

A central motivation of all fiends is to taint the souls of mortals with evil. Fiends seduce them with promises of their hearts' desire, and thus lure them down the path of darkness. Attempting to halt or reverse the effects of such corruption can provide fascinating and challenging adventures.

On a societal level, the corruption spawned by a fiend is often manifested in bizarre cults, which some lawful fiends find amusing or useful. These fiends promise riches, power, or rewards in the afterlife to their followers in exchange for unswerving devotion, rigid intolerance, and, often, violence to achieve the fiends' ends. Another symptom of fiendish taint may be disorganized pseudo-religions devoted solely to debauchery or random acts of violence (the cults of a chaotic fiend).

The heroes may be drawn into action against a fiendish cult by their opposition to

oppressive social policies the cult is trying to impose on a region, thus crossing the fiend by defending innocent villagers. They may also be hired or volunteer to attack or defend against marauding cultists, or may encounter groups of cultists working against them while they are on what they believed to be an adventure completely unrelated to any of these issues. Exploring the origins of the cult or penetrating deeper into the inner circle of believers then leads the heroes to evidence of the existence of a fiend.

Combining such a storyline with the theme of deception, a campaign might feature a cult that is believed to be devoted to good by the general populace. Even the heroes are occasional agents of the cultists and their grandfatherly leader, the Master of the Path. However, they gradually uncover that the Master is actually a fiend, and that which the cult promotes as light is actually the blackest evil. In their attempts to unmask and thwart the evil, the characters become outcasts, hunted by friends and foes alike; not only must they guard against the fiend's evil servants, but they must be leery of those of good heart who have been misguided. The heroes are in a race against the fiend for the fate of an entire community.

On an individual level, the heroes might battle the corrupting effects of a fiend by attempting to save a person (perhaps even a player character!) who has been possessed by a fiend, or who is in the process of transposition. Adventures like these, fought over the battleground of the mortal spirit, present exceptional opportunities for role-playing and character development. Saving an individual from transposition is extraordinarily difficult, as is wresting someone from the grasp of a fiend on this Demiplane. Yet while the risks are great, the heroic reward is equally great.

Terror

From the time we were very small, we have feared things we do not understand. For some of us, there were monsters in the closets. For others, things lurked under our beds at nights. And there were always those strange, unexplainable sounds. Fiends are perhaps the ultimate terror for mortals in the Land of the Mists. They come from the outer darkness–inexplicable, alien, extraordinarily powerful and utterly evil.

Fiends are not native to the Ravenloft campaign setting. Unlike other worlds, where the baatezu and tanar'ri are more common, in the Land of the Mists no one, not even Dr. Van Richten himself, knows the true extent of fiends' abilities. This unknown quality of fiends lends itself to terror.

A creative DM can exploit the powers and mystery of fiends to promote an exhilarating sense of terror. The raw physical power of a fiend in a direct confrontation is enough to stun (and easily defeat) low to moderate level adventuring parties, but the true terror that a party may experience goes far beyond that superficial level. The magical and mental abilities of the fiend can defeat a party even more easily than its physical power, and the sense of an omnipotent or omniscient adversary manipulating events from behind the scenes can cause great fear and frustration.

One adventure might involve the heroes being stranded in some remote, desolate region . . . perhaps a barren plain that just emerged out of the Mists that had engulfed them. Low on supplies and possibly injured, they find themselves stalked by a mysterious being who is picking them off, one by one. (This is a fiend that is toying with the party, starting by killing off lower-level NPC companions of the heroes.) Weapons and spells have seemingly no effect on the monster, and just as it seems hopeless, they come upon a magical *healing* spring and the shack of a humble mystic. The mystic has just

the herbs needed to ward off the fearsome beast, but she needs the heroes to perform a small service for her. (The "mystic" is the fiend in disguise, and the heroes might just be frightened enough to enter into a bargain with it . . .)

Devastation

Beneath their varied exteriors, fiends have one thing in common: they come from the Lower Planes–the battlegrounds of the eternal Blood War. They are warriors, capable of massive carnage. As the heroes learn more about their enemy, the threat of terrible destruction should hang over them like a cloud.

The theme of devastation can be introduced into the campaign from the outset. The party may hear of incidents of mysterious deaths, mutilations, or on some occasions even the destruction of entire villages and small towns. The cause is a fiend that has either gone mad during its imprisonment in Ravenloft, or that it suits some fiendish purpose to have minions roam the countryside slaying at will. The sheer brutality of these acts should keep any heroes worth their salt on the creatures tail, even after they learn that it has the power to kill them ten times over.

Beyond the threat of physical destruction lies the threat and the reality of the destruction of the mortal spirit, or the destruction of the emotional framework or the intellectual frame of reference of the characters or NPCs. This type of destruction, in which the world-view of the characters is shattered, is a common result of a fiend's activity.

A possible scenario could revolve around a long-lost love of a hero. When young, his first love was a charming and stunningly beautiful woman. He left on an adventure, only to find her gone when he returned; he has pined for her ever since. Now a champion of goodness of growing renown, he and his companions are hot on the rail of a serial killer who targets young lovers, the hero discovers that the love he has considered ideal was all a sham: his beloved is an erinyes who would have slain him had she had the chance. Now, driven insane by a failed Power Ritual, the erinyes is preying on all who love. The hero and his companions will have to destroy her before the hero pays the ultimate price for once loving a a fiend in the body of a woman.

Once heroes encounter fiends, once they have been exposed to its multi-layered schemes and lies where the appearance of ultimate good might simply be a veneer over the blackest evil, they may never be certain of their place in the world again.

As Dr. Van Richten warned in his introduction to this volume, "Those who fight the good fight always risk the possibility of wounds that may never heal, wounds of the spirit . . ." Fiends touch the darkest of humanity, and in doing so they color even the brightest within. While the dying vow of a fiend—a vow that the hero will come to see that all he considered wholesome is truly that which is foul and putrid—is just one final, empty lie, the hero will always be uncertain whether they have been tainted by the experience or not, and never again will they know for sure if they are truly on the side of good.

While the heroes may destroy a fiend, even to the point of blasting its very essence into non-existence, the very exposure to its evil may haunt them for the rest of their lives, so even in their victory they suffer defeat . . . and, if DMs can properly convey this emotion, then they have captured the true horror behind the fiends.

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Van Richten's Guide to Fiends

There are realms and realms incomprehensible to the puny mortals who dwell within this cage that they term the Land of the Mists!

–The Madrigorian, *Book I, Chapter I*

Fiends have come forth from the Abyss and into Ravenloft! Masters of deception and manipulation, these ancient evil beings stalk the Lands, roaming freely in pursuit of their foul ends, and warping the very Land around them to suit their needs.

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